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DRAMAS OF GOETHE

The Works of J. W. von Goethe

With His Life by
GEORGE HENRY LEWES

In Fourteen Volumes
Volume VI

"And day by day upon the shore I stand"
Photogravure from the painting by Fleuerbach

The Works of J. W. von Goethe

With His Life by
GEORGE HENRY LEWES

Edited by
NATHAN HASKELL DOLE

Translations by
SIR WALTER SCOTT, SIR THEODORE MARTIN
JOHN OXENFORD, THOMAS CARLYLE
AND OTHERS

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Iphigenia in Tauris

A Drama in Five Acts

Translated by Anna Swanwick

Like Torquato Tasso, Iphigenia was originally written in prose, and in that form was acted at the Weimar Court Theatre about 1779. Goethe himself took the part of Orestes.

Introduction

THE drama of "Iphigenia in Tauris" has been considered Goethe's masterpiece: it is conceived in the spirit of Greek ideality, and is characterised throughout by moral beauty and dignified repose. Schlegel[1] styles it an echo of Greek song, an epithet as appropriate as it is elegant; for, without any servile imitation of classic models, this beautiful drama, through the medium of its polished verse, reproduces in softened characters the graceful and colossal forms of the antique.

The destiny of Agamemnon and his race was a favourite theme of the ancients. It has been dramatised in a variety of forms by the three great masters of antiquity; and from these various sources Goethe has gathered the materials for his drama, enriching it with touches of sublimity and beauty selected indiscriminately from the works of each. The description of the Furies in the third act is worthy of Æschylus, and in the spirit of the same great writer is the exclusion of these terrific powers from the consecrated grove symbolical of the peace which religion can alone afford to the anguish of a wounded conscience. The prominence given to the idea of destiny, together with the finished beauty of the whole, reminds us of Sophocles; while the passages conveying general moral truths, scattered throughout the poem, not unfrequently recall to our recollection those of a similar character in the dramas of Euripides.

The two dramas of Euripides are founded upon the well-known story of Iphigenia. In the "Iphigenia in

[1] "Dramatic Literature," Bohn's edition, p. 518.

Aulis," we are introduced to the assembled hosts of Greece, detained by contrary winds in consequence of Diana's anger against Agamemnon. An oracle had declared that the goddess could only be propitiated by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, who is accordingly allured with her mother to the camp. On discovering the fearful doom which awaits her, she is at first overwhelmed with grief. She implores her father to spare her life, endeavours to touch his heart by recalling the fond memories of bygone times, and holds up her infant brother, Orestes, that he may plead for her with his tears. Learning, however, that the glory of her country depends upon her death, she rises superior to her fears, subdues her womanly weakness, and devotes herself a willing sacrifice for Greece. She is conducted to the altar: the sacred garlands are bound around her head. Calchas lifts the knife to deal the fatal stroke, when Iphigenia suddenly vanishes, and a hind of uncommon beauty lies bleeding at his feet.

In the "Iphigenia in Tauris," our heroine reappears in the temple of Diana, situated in the Tauric Chersonese, a savage region washed by the Euxine Sea, where, according to the ancients, all strangers were sacrificed at the altar of Diana. To this wild shore Iphigenia had been conveyed by the pitying goddess; and there, in her character of priestess, she presided over the bloody rites of the barbarians. The incidents in this drama have been adopted by Goethe as the groundwork of his poem, the chief interest in which, as in the drama of Euripides, turns upon the departure of Iphigenia and Orestes from the Taurian shore. A brief outline of the Grecian drama will show in what particulars the modern poet has adhered to his classic model, and where he has deviated from it.

The scene of both is in the vicinity of the temple of Diana. In the opening soliloquy of the Grecian drama, Iphigenia, after lamenting her unhappy destiny, relates

her dream of the previous night, from which she infers the death of Orestes. She determines to offer a libation to his memory; and, while engaged in performing this pious rite, she is informed that two strangers have been captured on the shore, for whose sacrifice she is commanded to prepare. Orestes and Pylades are shortly after introduced; and learning from the former that he is a native of Argos, she offers to spare his life provided he will carry a letter for her to Mycene. He refuses to abandon his friend; Pylades is equally disinterested; a generous contest ensues; and the latter, yielding at length to the entreaties of Orestes, consents to accept life on the proposed conditions. The letter addressed to Orestes is produced, and Iphigenia discovers her brother in the intended victim. They anxiously consider how they may escape; and Iphigenia suggests, that, in her character of priestess, she lead them, together with the image of Diana, to the sea, there to be purified in the ocean waves, where they may find safety in the attendant bark. With all the wily sublety of a Greek, she imposes upon the credulity of the barbarian monarch, and induces him, not only to sanction her project, but to assist in its execution, which she at length successfully achieves. In this drama, Iphigenia, though exhibiting some noble traits, offends us by her unscrupulous violation of the truth, and by the cunning artifice which Goethe, with admirable art, has attributed to Pylades. We are the more displeased with this portrait, because we are unwilling to recognise in the crafty priestess the innocent victim who so strongly awakens our sympathy in the beautiful drama of "Iphigenia in Aulis." In the Iphigenia of Goethe, on the contrary, we discover with pleasure the same filial tenderness, and the same touching mixture of timidity and courage, which characterised that interesting heroine.

In the drama of Euripides we are chiefly interested

in the generous friendship of Orestes and Pylades; in that of Goethe the character of Iphigenia constitutes the chief charm, and awakens our warmest sympathy. While contemplating her, we feel as if some exquisite statue of Grecian art had become animated by a living soul, and moved and breathed before us: though exhibiting the severe simplicity which characterises the creations of antiquity, she is far removed from all coldness and austerity; and her character, though cast in a classic mould, is free from that harsh and vindictive spirit which darkened the heroism of those barbarous times when religion lent her sanction to hatred and revenge.

The docility with which, in opposition to her own feelings, she at first consents to the stratagem of Pylades, though apparently inconsistent with her reverence for truth, is in reality a beautiful and touching trait. The conflict in her mind between intense anxiety for her brother's safety, and detestation of the artifice by which alone she thinks it can be secured, amounts almost to agony: in her extremity she calls upon the gods, and implores them to save their image in her soul. The struggle finally subsides: she remains faithful to her high convictions, reveals the project of escape, and thus saves her soul from treachery. From the commencement of the fifth act she assumes a calm and lofty tone, as if feeling the inspiration of a noble purpose. The dignity and determination with which she opposes the cruel project of the barbarian king, remind us of the similar qualities displayed by the Antigone of Sophocles, who is perhaps the noblest heroine of antiquity. Thus, when called upon by the king to reverence the law, Iphigenia appeals to that law written in the heart, more ancient and more sacred than the ordinances of man; and Antigone, when, by the interment of her brother Polynices, she has incurred the anger of the tyrant Creon and become subjected to

a cruel death, justifies herself by an appeal to the same sacred authority.

The remaining characters of the drama, though subordinate to the central figure, are in admirable keeping with it; the poet having softened down the harsh features of the barbarians, so as not to form too abrupt a contrast with the more polished Greeks, and thereby interfere with the harmony of the piece. The colossal figures of the Titans appearing in the background, and the dread power of Destiny overarching all, impart a character of solemn grandeur to the whole.

Dramatis Personæ

IPHIGENIA.
THOAS, *King of the Taurians.*
ARKAS.
ORESTES.
PYLADES.

Iphigenia in Tauris

ACT I.

Scene I. — *A Grove before the Temple of Diana.*

IPHIGENIA.

Beneath your leafy gloom, ye waving boughs
Of this old, shady, consecrated grove,
As in the goddess' silent sanctuary,
With the same shuddering feeling forth I step,
As when I trod it first; nor ever here
Doth my unquiet spirit feel at home.
Long as a higher will, to which I bow,
Hath kept me here concealed, still, as at first,
I feel myself a stranger. For the sea
Doth sever me, alas! from those I love:
And day by day upon the shore I stand,
The land of Hellas seeking with my soul;
But, to my sighs, the hollow-sounding waves
Bring, save their own hoarse murmurs, no reply.
Alas for him! who, friendless and alone,
Remote from parents and from brethren dwells:
From him grief snatches every coming joy
Ere it doth reach his lip. His yearning thoughts
Throng back for ever to his father's halls,
Where first to him the radiant sun unclosed

The gates of heaven; where closer, day by day,
Brothers and sisters, leagued in pastime sweet,
Around each other twined love's tender bonds.
I will not reckon with the gods; yet truly
Deserving of lament is woman's lot.
Man rules alike at home and in the field,
Nor is in foreign climes without resource:
Him conquest crowneth, him possession gladdens,
And him an honourable death awaits.
How circumscribed is woman's destiny!
Obedience to a harsh, imperious lord,
Her duty and her comfort: sad her fate,
Whom hostile fortune drives to lands remote!
Thus Thoas holds me here, a noble man,
Bound with a heavy though a sacred chain.
Oh, how it shames me, goddess, to confess
That with repugnance I perform these rites
For thee, divine protectress! unto whom
I would in freedom dedicate my life.
In thee, Diana, I have always hoped;
And still I hope in thee, who didst infold
Within the holy shelter of thine arm
The outcast daughter of the mighty king.
Daughter of Jove! hast thou from ruined Troy
Led back in triumph to his native land
The mighty man, whom thou didst sore afflict,
His daughter's life in sacrifice demanding, —
Hast thou for him, the godlike Agamemnon,
Who to thine altar led his darling child,
Preserved his wife, Electra, and his son,
His dearest treasures? — then at length restore
Thy suppliant also to her friends and home,
And save her, as thou once from death didst save,
So now, from living here, a second death.

Scene II. — Iphigenia, Arkas.

ARKAS.

The king hath sent me hither, bade me greet
With hail, and fair salute, Diana's priestess.
For new and wondrous conquest, this the day,
When to her goddess Tauris renders thanks.
I hasten on before the king and host,
Himself to herald, and its near approach.

IPHIGENIA.

We are prepared to give them worthy greeting:
Our goddess doth behold with gracious eye
The welcome sacrifice from Thoas' hand.

ARKAS.

Would that I also found the priestess' eye,
Much honoured, much revered one, found thine eye,
O consecrated maid, more calm, more bright,
To all a happy omen! Still doth grief,
With gloom mysterious, shroud thy inner mind:
Vainly, through many a tedious year, we wait
For one confiding utterance from thy breast.
Long as I've known thee in this holy place,
That look of thine hath ever made me shudder;
And, as with iron bands, thy soul remains
Locked in the deep recesses of thy breast.

IPHIGENIA.

As doth become the exile and the orphan.

ARKAS.

Dost thou, then, here seem exiled and an orphan?

IPHIGENIA.

Can foreign scenes our fatherland replace?

ARKAS.

Thy fatherland is foreign now to thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Hence is it that my bleeding heart ne'er heals.
In early youth, when first my soul, in love,
Held father, mother, brethren fondly twined,
A group of tender germs, in union sweet,
We sprang in beauty from the parent stem,
And heavenward grew: alas! a foreign curse
Then seized and severed me from those I loved,
And wrenched with iron grasp the beauteous bands.
It vanished then, the fairest charm of youth,
The simple gladness of life's early dawn;
Though saved, I was a shadow of myself,
And life's fresh joyance blooms in me no more.

ARKAS.

If thou wilt ever call thyself unblest,
I must accuse thee of ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Thanks have you ever.

ARKAS.

Not the honest thanks
Which prompt the heart to offices of love;
The joyous glance, revealing to the host
A grateful spirit, with its lot content.
When thee a deep mysterious destiny

Brought to this sacred fane, long years ago,
To greet thee, as a treasure sent from heaven,
With reverence and affection, Thoas came.
Benign and friendly was this shore to thee,
To every stranger else with horror fraught;
For, till thy coming, none e'er trod our realm
But fell, according to an ancient rite,
A bloody victim at Diana's shrine.

IPHIGENIA.

Freely to breathe alone is not to live.
Say, is it life, within this holy fane,
Like a poor ghost around its sepulchre
To linger out my days? Or call you that
A life of conscious happiness and joy,
When every hour, dreamed listlessly away,
Still leadeth onward to those gloomy days
Which the sad troop of the departed spend
In self-forgetfulness on Lethe's shore?
A useless life is but an early death:
This woman's destiny hath still been mine.

ARKAS.

I can forgive, though I must needs deplore,
The noble pride which underrates itself:
It robs thee of the happiness of life.
But hast thou, since thy coming here, done nought?
Who hath the monarch's gloomy temper cheered?
Who hath with gentle eloquence annulled,
From year to year, the usage of our sires,
By which, a victim at Diana's shrine,
Each stranger perished, thus from certain death
Sending so oft the rescued captive home?
Hath not Diana, harbouring no revenge
For this suspension of her bloody rites,
In richest measure heard thy gentle prayer?

On joyous pinions o'er the advancing host,
Doth not triumphant conquest proudly soar?
And feels not every one a happier lot,
Since Thoas, who so long hath guided us
With wisdom and with valour, swayed by thee,
The joy of mild benignity approves,
Which leads him to relax the rigid claims
Of mute submission? Call thyself useless! Thou,
When, from thy being, o'er a thousand hearts,
A healing balsam flows? when to a race,
To whom a god consigned thee, thou dost prove
A fountain of perpetual happiness,
And from this dire, inhospitable coast,
Dost to the stranger grant a safe return?

IPHIGENIA.

The little done doth vanish to the mind
Which forward sees how much remains to do.

ARKAS.

Him dost thou praise, who underrates his deeds?

IPHIGENIA.

Who weigheth his own deeds is justly blamed.

ARKAS.

He too, real worth too proudly who condemns,
As who, too vainly, spurious worth o'errateth.
Trust me, and heed the counsel of a man
With honest zeal devoted to thy service:
When Thoas comes to-day to speak with thee,
Lend to his purposed words a gracious ear.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy well-intentioned counsel troubles me:
His offer I have ever sought to shun.

ARKAS.

Thy duty and thy interest calmly weigh.
Sithence King Thoas lost his son and heir,
Among his followers he trusts but few,
And trusts those few no more as formerly.
With jealous eye he views each noble's son
As the successor of his realm: he dreads
A solitary, helpless age — perchance
Sudden rebellion and untimely death.
A Scythian studies not the rules of speech,
And least of all the king. He who is used
To act and to command, knows not the art,
From far, with subtle tact, to guide discourse
Through many windings to its destined goal.
Thwart not his purpose by a cold refusal,
By an intended misconception. Meet,
With gracious mien, half-way the royal wish.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall I, then, speed the doom that threatens me?

ARKAS.

His gracious offer canst thou call a threat?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis the most terrible of all to me.

ARKAS.

For his affection grant him confidence.

IPHIGENIA.

If he will first redeem my soul from fear.

ARKAS.

Why dost thou hide from him thy origin?

IPHIGENIA.

A priestess secrecy doth well become.

ARKAS.

Nought to a monarch should a secret be;
And, though he doth not seek to fathom thine,
His noble nature feels, ay, deeply feels,
That thou with care dost hide thyself from him.

IPHIGENIA.

Ill-will and anger harbours he against me?

ARKAS.

Almost it seems so. True, he speaks not of thee;
But casual words have taught me that the wish
Thee to possess hath firmly seized his soul:
Oh, leave him not a prey unto himself,
Lest his displeasure, ripening in his breast,
Should work thee woe, so with repentance thou
Too late my faithful counsel shalt recall!

IPHIGENIA.

How! doth the monarch purpose what no man
Of noble mind, who loves his honest name,
Whose bosom reverence for the gods restrains,
Would ever think of? Will he force employ
To drag me from the altar to his bed?
Then will I call the gods, and chiefly thee,
Diana, goddess resolute, to aid me:
Thyself a virgin, wilt a virgin shield.
And to thy priestess gladly render aid.

ARKAS.

Be tranquil! Passion, and youth's fiery blood,
Impel not Thoas rashly to commit

A deed so lawless. In his present mood,
I fear from him another harsh resolve,
Which (for his soul is steadfast and unmoved)
He then will execute without delay.
Therefore I pray thee, canst thou grant no more,
At least be grateful — give thy confidence.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, tell me what is further known to thee.

ARKAS.

Learn it from him. I see the king approach:
Him thou dost honour, thine own heart enjoins
To meet him kindly and with confidence.
A man of noble mind may oft be led
By woman's gentle word.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

How to observe
His faithful counsel see I not in sooth.
But willingly the duty I perform
Of giving thanks for benefits received,
And much I wish that to the king my lips
With truth could utter what would please his ear.

Scene III. — Iphigenia, Thoas.

IPHIGENIA.

Her royal gifts the goddess shower on thee,
Imparting conquest, wealth, and high renown,
Dominion, and the welfare of thy house;
With the fullfilment of each pious wish,
That thou, whose sway for multitudes provides,
Thyself mayest be supreme in happiness!

THOAS.

Contented were I with my people's praise;
My conquests others more than I enjoy.
Oh! be he king or subject, he's most blest,
Whose happiness is centred in his home.
My deep affliction thou didst share with me
What time, in war's encounter, the fell sword
Tore from my side my last, my dearest son:
So long as fierce revenge possessed my heart,
I did not feel my dwelling's dreary void;
But now, returning home, my rage appeased,
Their kingdom wasted, and my son avenged,
I find there nothing left to comfort me.
The glad obedience I was wont to see
Kindling in every eye, is smothered now
In discontent and gloom: each, pondering, weighs
The changes which a future day may bring,
And serves the childless king because he must.
To-day I come within this sacred fane,
Which I have often entered to implore
And thank the gods for conquest. In my breast
I bear an old and fondly cherished wish,
To which methinks thou canst not be a stranger:
I hope, a blessing to myself and realm,
To lead thee to my dwelling as my bride.

IPHIGENIA.

Too great thine offer, king, to one unknown:
Abashed the fugitive before thee stands,
Who on this shore sought only what thou gavest, —
Safety and peace.

THOAS.

Thus still to shroud thyself
From me, as from the lowest, in the veil
Of mystery which wrapped thy coming here,
Would in no country be deemed just or right.

Strangers this shore appalled: 'twas so ordained,
Alike by law and stern necessity.
From thee alone, — a kindly welcomed guest,
Who hast enjoyed each hallowed privilege,
And spent thy days in freedom unrestrained, —
From thee I hoped that confidence to gain
Which every faithful host may justly claim.

IPHIGENIA.

If I concealed, O king! my name, my race,
It was embarrassment, and not mistrust.
For didst thou know who stands before thee now,
And what accursed head thine arm protects,
Strange horror would possess thy mighty heart;
And, far from wishing me to share thy throne,
Thou, ere the time appointed, from thy realm
Wouldst banish me; wouldst thrust me forth, per
chance,
Before a glad reunion with my friends
And period to my wanderings is ordained,
To meet that sorrow, which, in every clime,
With cold, inhospitable, fearful hand,
Awaits the outcast, exiled from his home.

THOAS.

Whate'er respecting thee the gods decree,
Whate'er their doom for thee and for thy house,
Since thou hast dwelt amongst us, and enjoyed
The privilege the pious stranger claims,
To me hath failed no blessing sent from heaven;
And to persuade me, that protecting thee
I shield a guilty head, were hard indeed.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy bounty, not the guest, draws blessings down.

THOAS.

The kindness shown the wicked is not blest.
End, then, thy silence, priestess: not unjust
Is he who doth demand it. In my hands
The goddess placed thee; thou hast been to me
As sacred as to her, and her behest
Shall for the future also be my law:
If thou canst hope in safety to return
Back to thy kindred, I renounce my claims;
But is thy homeward path for ever closed,
Or doth thy race in hopeless exile rove,
Or lie extinguished by some mighty woe,
Then may I claim thee by more laws than one.
Speak openly: thou knowest I keep my word.

IPHIGENIA.

Its ancient bands reluctantly my tongue
Doth loose, a long-hid secret to divulge,
For once imparted, it resumes no more
The safe asylum of the inmost heart,
But thenceforth, as the Powers above decree,
Doth work its ministry of weal or woe.
Attend! I issue from the Titan's race.

THOAS.

A word momentous calmly hast thou spoken
Him namest thou ancestor whom all the world
Knows as a sometime favourite of the gods?
Is it that Tantalus, whom Jove himself
Drew to his council and his social board?
On whose experienced words, with wisdom fraught,
As on the language of an oracle,
E'en gods delighted hung?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis even he:
But the immortal gods with mortal men
Should not, on equal terms, hold intercourse;
For all too feeble is the human race,
Not to grow dizzy on unwonted heights.
Ignoble was he not, and no betrayer;
To be the Thunderer's slave, he was too great;
To be his friend and comrade, — but a man.
His crime was human, and their doom severe;
For poets sing, that treachery and pride
Did from Jove's table hurl him headlong down
To grovel in the depths of Tartarus.
Alas! and his whole race must bear their hate.

THOAS.

Bear they their own guilt, or their ancestor's?

IPHIGENIA.

The Titan's mighty breast and nervous frame
Was his descendants' certain heritage;
But round their brow Jove forged a band of brass.
Wisdom and patience, prudence and restraint,
He from their gloomy, fearful eye concealed;
In them each passion grew to savage rage,
And headlong rushed with violence unchecked.
Already Pelops, Tantalus' loved son,
Mighty of will, obtained his beauteous bride,
Hippodamia, child of Œnomaus,
Through treachery and murder: she, ere long,
To glad her consort's heart, bare him two sons,
Thyest and Atreus. They with envy marked
The ever-growing love their father bare
To his first-born, sprung from another union.
Hate leagued the pair; and secretly they wrought,

In fratricide, the first dread crime. The sire
Hippodamia held as murderess:
With savage rage he claimed from her his son,
And she in terror did destroy herself —

THOAS.

Thou'rt silent? Pause not in thy narrative,
Repent not of thy confidence — say on!

IPHIGENIA.

How blest is he who his progenitors
With pride remembers, to the listener tells
The story of their greatness, of their deeds,
And, silently rejoicing, sees himself
The latest link of this illustrious chain!
For seldom does the self-same stock produce
The monster and the demigod: a line
Or good or evil ushers in, at last,
The glory or the terror of the world. —
After the death of Pelops, his two sons
Ruled o'er the city with divided sway.
But such an union could not long endure.
His brother's honour first Thyestes wounds.
In vengeance Atreus drove him from the realm.
Thyestes, planning horrors, long before
Had stealthily procured his brother's son,
Whom he in secret nurtured as his own.
Revenge and fury in his breast he poured,
Then to the royal city sent him forth,
That in his uncle he might slay his sire.
The meditated murder was disclosed,
And by the king most cruelly avenged,
Who slaughtered, as he thought, his brother's son.
Too late he learned whose dying tortures met
His drunken gaze; and, seeking to assuage
The insatiate vengeance that possessed his soul,

He planned a deed unheard of. He assumed
A friendly tone; seemed reconciled, appeased;
And lured his brother, with his children twain,
Back to his kingdom; these he seized and slew,
Then placed the loathsome and abhorrent food
At his first meal before the unconscious sire.
And when Thyestes had his hunger stilled
With his own flesh, a sadness seized his soul:
He for his children asked, — their steps, their voice,
Fancied he heard already at the door;
And Atreus, grinning with malicious joy,
Threw in the members of the slaughtered boys. —
Shuddering, O king, thou dost avert thy face!
So did the sun his radiant visage hide,
And swerve his chariot from the eternal path.
These, monarch, are thy priestess' ancestors;
And many a dreadful fate of mortal doom,
And many a deed of the bewildered brain,
Dark night doth cover with her sable wing,
Or shroud in gloomy twilight.

THOAS.

Hidden there
Let them abide. A truce to horror now,
And tell me by what miracle thou sprangest
From race so savage.

IPHIGENIA.

Atreus' eldest son
Was Agamemnon, — he, O king, my sire!
But I may say with truth, that, from a child,
In him the model of a perfect man
I witnessed ever. Clytemnestra bore
To him, myself, the firstling of their love,
Electra then. Peaceful the monarch ruled,

And to the house of Tantalus was given
A long-withheld repose. A son alone
Was wanting to complete my parents' bliss:
Scarce was this wish fulfilled, and young Orestes,
The household's darling, with his sisters grew,
When new misfortunes vexed our ancient house.
To you hath come the rumour of the war,
Which, to avenge the fairest woman's wrongs,
The force united of the Grecian kings
Round Ilion's walls encamped. Whether the town
Was humbled, and achieved their great revenge,
I have not heard. My father led the host.
In Aulis vainly for a favouring gale
They waited; for, enraged against their chief,
Diana stayed their progress, and required,
Through Calchas' voice, the monarch's eldest daughter.
They lured me with my mother to the camp:
They dragged me to the altar, and this head
There to the goddess doomed. — She was appeased;
She did not wish my blood, and shrouded me
In a protecting cloud: within this temple
I first awakened from the dream of death;
Yes, I myself am she, Iphigenia,
Grandchild of Atreus, Agamemnon's child,
Diana's priestess, I who speak with thee.

THOAS.

I yield no higher honour or regard
To the king's daughter than the maid unknown:
Once more my first proposal I repeat;
Come, follow me, and share what I possess.

IPHIGENIA.

How dare I venture such a step, O king?
Hath not the goddess who protected me

Alone a right to my devoted head?
'Twas she who chose for me this sanctuary,
Where she perchance reserves me for my sire,
By my apparent death enough chastised,
To be the joy and solace of his age.
Perchance my glad return is near; and how,
If I, unmindful of her purposes,
Had here attached myself against her will?
I asked a signal, did she wish my stay.

THOAS.

The signal is, that still thou tarriest here.
Seek not evasively such vain pretexts.
Not many words are needed to refuse,
The *no* alone is heard by the refused.

IPHIGENIA.

Mine are not words meant only to deceive:
I have to thee my inmost heart revealed.
And doth no inward voice suggest to thee,
How I with yearning soul must pine to see
My father, mother, and my long-lost home?
Oh, let thy vessels bear me thither, king!
That in the ancient halls, where sorrow still
In accents low doth fondly breathe my name,
Joy, as in welcome of a new-born child,
May round the columns twine the fairest wreath.
New life thou wouldst to me and mine impart.

THOAS.

Then, go! Obey the promptings of thy heart,
And to the voice of reason and good counsel
Close thou thine ear. Be quite the woman, give
To every wish the rein, that, bridleless,
May seize on thee, and whirl thee here and there.
When burns the fire of passion in her breast,

No sacred tie withholds her from the wretch
Who would allure her to forsake for him
A husband's or a father's guardian arms;
Extinct within her heart its fiery glow,
The golden tongue of eloquence in vain
With words of truth and power assails her ear.

IPHIGENIA.

Remember now, O king, thy noble words!
My trust and candour wilt thou thus repay?
Thou seemest, methinks, prepared to hear the truth.

THOAS.

For this unlooked-for answer not prepared.
Yet 'twas to be expected: knew I not
That with a woman I had now to deal?

IPHIGENIA.

Upbraid not thus, O king, our feeble sex!
Though not in dignity to match with yours,
The weapons woman wields are not ignoble.
And trust me, Thoas, in thy happiness
I have a deeper insight than thyself.
Thou thinkest, ignorant alike of both,
A closer union would augment our bliss;
Inspired with confidence and honest zeal
Thou strongly urgest me to yield consent:
And here I thank the gods, who give me strength
To shun a doom unratified by them.

THOAS.

'Tis not a god, 'tis thine own heart, that speaks.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis through the heart alone they speak to us.

THOAS.

To hear them have I not an equal right?

IPHIGENIA.

The raging tempest drowns the still small voice.

THOAS.

This voice no doubt the priestess hears alone.

IPHIGENIA.

Before all others should the prince attend it.

THOAS.

Thy sacred office, and ancestral right
To Jove's own table, place thee with the gods
In closer union than an earth-born savage.

IPHIGENIA.

Thus must I now the confidence atone
Thyself didst wring from me!

THOAS.

I am a man.
And better 'tis we end this conference.
Hear, then, my last resolve. Be priestess still
Of the great goddess who selected thee;
And may she pardon me, that I from her,
Unjustly, and with secret self-reproach,
Her ancient sacrifice so long withheld!
From olden time no stranger neared our shore
But fell a victim at her sacred shrine.

But thou, with kind affection (which at times
Seemed like a gentle daughter's tender love,
At times assumed to my enraptured heart
The modest inclination of a bride),
Didst so enthrall me, as with magic bonds,
That I forgot my duty. Thou didst rock
My senses in a dream: I did not hear
My people's murmurs; now they cry aloud,
Ascribing my poor son's untimely death
To this my guilt. No longer for thy sake
Will I oppose the wishes of the crowd,
Who urgently demand the sacrifice.

IPHIGENIA.

For mine own sake I ne'er desired it from thee.
Who to the gods ascribe a thirst for blood
Do misconceive their nature, and impute
To them their own inhuman dark desires.
Did not Diana snatch me from the priest,
Holding my service dearer than my death?

THOAS.

'Tis not for us, on reason's shifting grounds,
Lightly to guide and construe rites divine.
Perform thy duty: I'll accomplish mine.
Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
We found concealed, and whose arrival here
Bodes to my realm no good, are in my power.
With them thy goddess may once more resume
Her ancient, pious, long-suspended rites!
I send them here, — thy duty not unknown. [*Exit.*

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

Gracious protectress! thou hast clouds
To shelter innocence distressed,

And from the arms of iron fate,
Gently to waft her o'er the sea,
O'er the wide earth's remotest realms,
Where'er it seemeth good to thee.
Wise art thou, — thine all-seeing eye
The future and the past surveys:
Thy glance doth o'er thy children rest,
E'en as thy light, the life of night,
Keeps o'er the earth its silent watch.
O Goddess! keep my hands from blood!
Blessing it never brings, and peace;
And still in evil hours the form
Of the chance-murdered man appears
To fill the unwilling murderer's soul
With horrible and gloomy fears.
For fondly the Immortals view
Man's widely scattered, simple race;
And the poor mortal's transient life
Gladly prolong, that he may lift
Awhile to their eternal heavens
His sympathetic joyous gaze.

ACT II.

Scene I. — Orestes, Pylades.

ORESTES.

It is the path of death that now we tread:
At every step my soul grows more serene.
When I implored Apollo to remove
The grisly band of Furies from my side,
He seemed, with hope-inspiring, godlike words,
To promise aid and safety in the fane
Of his loved sister, who o'er Tauris rules.
Thus the prophetic word fulfils itself,

That with my life shall terminate my woe.
How easy 'tis for me, whose heart is crushed,
Whose sense is deadened by a hand divine,
Thus to renounce the beauteous light of day!
And must the son of Atreus not entwine
The wreath of conquest round his dying brow?
Must I, as my forefathers, as my sire,
Bleed like a victim, — an ignoble death?
So be it! Better at the altar here,
Than in a nook obscure, where kindred hands
Have spread assassination's wily net.
Yield me this brief repose, infernal Powers!
Ye, who, like loosened hounds, still scent the blood
Which, trickling from my feet, betrays my path.
Leave me! ere long I come to you below.
Nor you, nor I, should view the light of day.
The soft green carpet of the beauteous earth
Is no arena for unhallowed fiends.
Below I seek you, where an equal fate
Binds all in murky, never-ending night.
Thee only, thee, my Pylades, my friend,
The guiltless partner of my crime and curse,
Thee am I loath, before thy time, to take
To yonder cheerless shore! Thy life or death
Alone awakens in me hope or fear.

PYLADES.

Like thee, Orestes, I am not prepared
Downwards to wander to yon realm of shade.
I purpose still, through the entangled paths,
Which seem as they would lead to blackest night,
Again to wind our upward way to life.
Of death I think not: I observe and mark
Whether the gods may not perchance present
Means and fit moment for a joyful flight.
Dreaded or not, the stroke of death must come,

And though the priestess stood with hand upraised,
Prepared to cut our consecrated locks,
Our safety still should be my only thought:
Uplift thy soul above this weak despair;
Desponding doubts but hasten on our peril.
Apollo pledged to us his sacred word,
That in his sister's holy fane for thee
Were comfort, aid, and glad return prepared.
The words of Heaven are not equivocal,
As in despair the poor oppressed one thinks.

ORESTES.

The mystic web of life my mother cast
Around my infant head, and so I grew
An image of my sire; and my mute look
Was aye a bitter and a keen reproof
To her and base Ægisthus. Oh, how oft,
When silently within our gloomy hall
Electra sat, and mused beside the fire,
Have I with anguished spirit climbed her knee,
And watched her bitter tears with sad amaze!
Then would she tell me of our noble sire:
How much I longed to see him — be with him!
Myself at Troy one moment fondly wished,
My sire's return the next. The day arrived —

PYLADES.

Oh, of that awful hour let fiends of hell
Hold nightly converse! Of a time more fair
May the remembrance animate our hearts
To fresh heroic deeds. The gods require
On this wide earth the service of the good,
To work their pleasure. Still they count on thee;
For in thy father's train they sent thee not,
When he to Orcus went unwilling down.

ORESTES.

Would I had seized the border of his robe,
And followed him!

PYLADES.

They kindly cared for me
Who held thee here: for, hadst thou ceased to live,
I know not what had then become of me;
Since I with thee, and for thy sake alone,
Have from my childhood lived, and wish to live.

ORESTES.

Remind me not of those delightsome days
When me thy home a safe asylum gave:
With fond solicitude thy noble sire
The half-nipped tender floweret gently reared;
While thou, a friend and playmate always gay,
Like to a light and brilliant butterfly
Around a dusky flower, didst day by day
Around me with new life thy gambols urge,
And breathe thy joyous spirit in my soul,
Until, my cares forgetting, I with thee
Was lured to snatch the eager joys of youth.

PYLADES.

My very life began when thee I loved.

ORESTES.

Say, then thy woes began, and thou speakest truly.
This is the sharpest sorrow of my lot,
That, like a plague-infected wretch, I bear
Death and destruction hid within my breast;
That, where I tread, e'en on the healthiest spot,
Ere long the blooming faces round betray
The anguished features of a lingering death.

PYLADES.

Were thy breath venom, I had been the first
To die that death, Orestes. Am I not,
As ever, full of courage and of joy?
And love and courage are the spirit's wings
Wafting to noble actions.

ORESTES.

Noble actions?
Time was, when fancy painted such before us!
When oft, the game pursuing, on we roamed
O'er hill and valley; hoping, that ere long,
Like our great ancestors in heart and hand,
With club and weapon armed, we so might track
The robber to his den, or monster huge.
And then at twilight, by the boundless sea,
Peaceful we sat, reclined against each other;
The waves came dancing to our very feet,
And all before us lay the wide, wide world;
Then on a sudden one would seize his sword,
And future deeds shone round us like the stars,
Which gemmed in countless throngs the vault of night.

PYLADES.

Endless, my friend, the projects which the soul
Burns to accomplish. We would every deed
At once perform as grandly as it shows
After long ages, when from land to land
The poet's swelling song hath rolled it on.
It sounds so lovely what our fathers did,
When, in the silent evening-shade reclined,
We drink it in with music's melting tones;
And what we do is, as their deeds to them,
Toilsome and incomplete!
Thus we pursue what always flies before:
We disregard the path in which we tread,

Scarce see around the footsteps of our sires,
Or heed the trace of their career on earth.
We ever hasten on to chase their shades,
Which, god-like, at a distance far remote,
On golden clouds, the mountain summits crown.
The man I prize not who esteems himself
Just as the people's breath may chance to raise him.
But thou, Orestes, to the gods give thanks,
That they through thee have early done so much.

ORESTES.

When they ordain a man to noble deeds,
To shield from dire calamity his friends,
Extend his empire, or protect its bounds,
Or put to flight its ancient enemies,
Let him be grateful! For to him a god
Imparts the first, the sweetest, joy of life.
Me have they doomed to be a slaughterer,
To be an honoured mother's murderer,
And, shamefully a deed of shame avenging,
Me through their own decree they have o'erwhelmed.
Trust me, the race of Tantalus is doomed;
And I, his last descendant, may not perish,
Or crowned with honour or unstained by crime.

PYLADES.

The gods avenge not on the son the deeds
Done by their father. Each, or good or bad,
Of his own actions reaps the due reward.
The parents' blessing, not their curse, descends.

ORESTES.

Methinks their blessing did not lead us here.

PYLADES.

It was at least the mighty gods' decree.

ORESTES.

Then is it their decree which doth destroy us.

PYLADES.

Perform what they command, and wait the event.
Do thou Apollo's sister bear from hence,
That they at Delphi may united dwell,
There by a noble-thoughted race revered;
Thee, for this deed, the lofty pair will view
With gracious eye, and from the hateful grasp
Of the infernal Powers will rescue thee.
E'en now none dares intrude within this grove.

ORESTES.

So shall I die at least a peaceful death.

PYLADES.

Far other are my thoughts, and not unskilled
Have I the future and the past combined
In quiet meditation. Long, perchance,
Hath ripened in the counsel of the gods
The great event. Diana yearns to leave
The savage coast of these barbarians,
Foul with their sacrifice of human blood.
We were selected for the high emprise:
To us it is assigned, and strangely thus
We are conducted to the threshold here.

ORESTES.

My friend, with wondrous skill thou linkest thy wish
With the predestined purpose of the gods.

PYLADES.

Of what avail is prudence, if it fail
Heedful to mark the purposes of Heaven?
A noble man, who much hath sinned, some god
Doth summon to a dangerous enterprise,
Which to achieve appears impossible.
The hero conquers, and atoning serves
Mortals and gods, who thenceforth honour him.

ORESTES.

Am I foredoomed to action and to life,
Would that a god from my distempered brain
Might chase this dizzy fever, which impels
My restless steps along a slippery path,
Stained with a mother's blood, to direful death
And, pitying, dry the fountain, whence the blood,
For ever spouting from a mother's wounds,
Eternally defiles me!

PYLADES.

Wait in peace!
Thou dost increase the evil, and dost take
The office of the Furies on thyself.
Let me contrive — be still! And when at length
The time for action claims our powers combined,
Then will I summon thee, and on we'll stride,
With cautious boldness to achieve the event.

ORESTES.

I hear Ulysses speak.

PYLADES.

Nay, mock me not.
Each must select the hero after whom

To climb the steep and difficult ascent
Of high Olympus. And to me it seems
That him nor stratagem nor art defiles
Who consecrates himself to noble deeds.

ORESTES.

I most esteem the brave and upright man.

PYLADES.

And therefore have I not desired thy counsel.
One step's already taken. From our guards
E'en now I this intelligence have gained, —
A strange and godlike woman holds in check
The execution of that bloody law:
Incense and prayer, and an unsullied heart, —
These are the gifts she offers to the gods.
Rumour extols her highly: it is thought
That from the race of Amazon she springs,
And hither fled some great calamity.

ORESTES.

Her gentle sway, it seems, lost all its power
When hither came the culprit whom the curse,
Like murky night, envelops and pursues.
Our doom to seal, the pious thirst for blood
The ancient cruel rite again unchains:
The monarch's savage will decrees our death;
A woman cannot save when he condemns.

PYLADES.

That 'tis a woman, is a ground for hope!
A man, the very best, with cruelty
At length may so familiarise his mind,
His character through custom so transform,
That he shall come to make himself a law

Of what at first his very soul abhorred.
But woman doth retain the stamp of mind
She first assumed. On her we may depend
In good or evil with more certainty.
She comes: leave us alone. I dare not tell
At once our names, nor unreserved confide
Our fortunes to her. Now, retire awhile;
And ere she speaks with thee we'll meet again.

Scene II. — Iphigenia, Pylades.

IPHIGENIA.

Whence art thou? Stranger, speak! To me thy bearing
Stamps thee of Grecian, not of Scythian, race.
(*She unbinds his chains.*)
The freedom that I give is dangerous:
The gods avert the doom that threatens you!

PYLADES.

Delicious music! dearly welcome tones
Of our own language in a foreign land!
With joy my captive eye once more beholds
The azure mountains of my native coast.
Oh, let this joy that I too am a Greek
Convince thee, priestess! How I need thine aid,
A moment I forget, my spirit rapt
In contemplation of so fair a vision.
If fate's dread mandate doth not seal thy lips,
From which of our illustrious races say,
Dost thou thy god-like origin derive?

IPHIGENIA.

The priestess whom the goddess hath herself
Selected and ordained doth speak with thee.

Let that suffice; but tell me, who art thou,
And what unblessed o'erruling destiny
Hath hither led thee with thy friend?

PYLADES.

The woe,
Whose hateful presence ever dogs our steps,
I can with ease relate. Oh, would that thou
Couldst with like ease, divine one, shed on us
One ray of cheering hope! We are from Crete,
Adrastus' sons, and I, the youngest born,
Named Cephalus; my eldest brother, he,
Laodamus. Between us stood a youth
Savage and wild, who severed e'en in sport
The joy and concord of our early youth.
Long as our father led his powers at Troy,
Passive our mother's mandate we obeyed;
But when, enriched with booty, he returned,
And shortly after died, a contest fierce,
Both for the kingdom and their father's wealth,
His children parted. I the eldest joined;
He slew our brother; and the Furies hence
For kindred murder dog his restless steps.
But to this savage shore the Delphian god
Hath sent us, cheered by hope. He bade us wait
Within his sister's consecrated fane
The blessed hand of aid. Captives we are;
And, hither brought, before thee now we stand
Ordained for sacrifice. My tale is told.

IPHIGENIA.

Fell Troy! Dear man, assure me of its fall.

PYLADES.

Prostrate it lies. Oh, unto us ensure
Deliverance! The promised aid of heaven

More swiftly bring. Take pity on my brother.
Oh, say to him a kind, a gracious word:
But spare him when thou speakest, — earnestly
This I implore; for all too easily,
Through joy and sorrow and through memory,
Torn and distracted is his inmost being.
A feverish madness oft doth seize on him,
Yielding his spirit, beautiful and free,
A prey to Furies.

IPHIGENIA.

Great as is thy woe,
Forget it, I conjure thee, for awhile,
Till I am satisfied.

PYLADES.

The stately town,
Which ten long years withstood the Grecian host,
Now lies in ruins, ne'er to rise again;
Yet many a hero's grave will oft recall
Our sad remembrance to that barbarous shore.
There lies Achilles and his noble friend.

IPHIGENIA.

So are ye god-like forms reduced to dust!

PYLADES.

Nor Palamede, nor Ajax, e'er again
The daylight of their native land beheld.

IPHIGENIA.

He speaks not of my father, doth not name
Him with the fallen. He may yet survive!
I may behold him! still hope on, fond heart!

PYLADES.

Yet happy are the thousands who received
Their bitter death-blow from a hostile hand!
For terror wild, and end most tragical,
Some hostile, angry deity prepared,
Instead of triumph, for the home-returning.
Do human voices never reach this shore?
Far as their sound extends, they bear the fame
Of deeds unparalleled. And is the woe
Which fills Mycene's halls with ceaseless sighs
To thee a secret still? — And knowest thou not
That Clytemnestra, with Ægisthus' aid,
Her royal consort artfully ensnared,
And murdered on the day of his return? —
The monarch's house thou honourest! I perceive
Thy breast with tidings vainly doth contend
Fraught with such monstrous and unlooked-for woe.
Art thou the daughter of a friend? art born
Within the circuit of Mycene's walls?
Conceal it not, nor call me to account
That here the horrid crime I first announce.

IPHIGENIA.

Proceed, and tell me how the deed was done.

PYLADES.

The day of his return, as from the bath
Arose the monarch, tranquil and refreshed,
His robe demanding from his consort's hand,
A tangled garment, complicate with folds,
She o'er his shoulders flung and noble head:
And when, as from a net, he vainly strove
To extricate himself, the traitor, base
Ægisthus, smote him; and, enveloped thus,
Great Agamemnon sought the shades below.

IPHIGENIA.

And what reward received the base accomplice?

PYLADES.

A queen and kingdom he possessed already.

IPHIGENIA.

Base passion prompted, then, the deed of shame?

PYLADES.

And feelings, cherished long, of deep revenge.

IPHIGENIA.

How had the monarch injured Clytemnestra?

PYLADES.

By such a dreadful deed, that, if on earth
Aught could exculpate murder, it were this:
To Aulis he allured her, when the fleet
With unpropitious winds the goddess stayed;
And there, a victim on Diana's shrine,
The monarch, for the welfare of the Greeks,
Her eldest daughter doomed, Iphigenia.
And this, so rumour saith, within her heart
Planted such deep abhorrence, that forthwith
She to Ægisthus hath resigned herself,
And round her husband flung the web of death.

IPHIGENIA (*veiling herself*).

It is enough! Thou wilt again behold me.

PYLADES (*alone*).

The fortune of this royal house, it seems,
Doth move her deeply. Whosoe'er she be,

She must herself have known the monarch well; —
For our good fortune, from a noble house,
She hath been sold to bondage. Peace, my heart!
And let us steer our course with prudent zeal
Toward the star of hope which gleams upon us.

ACT III.

Scene I. — Iphigenia, Orestes.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy man, I only loose thy bonds
In token of a still severer doom.
The freedom which the sanctuary imparts,
Like the last life-gleam o'er the dying face,
But heralds death. I cannot, dare not, say
Your doom is hopeless; for, with murderous hand,
Could I inflict the fatal blow myself?
And, while I here am priestess of Diana,
None, be he who he may, dare touch your heads.
But the incensed king, should I refuse
Compliance with the rites himself enjoined,
Will choose another virgin from my train
As my successor. Then, alas! with nought,
Save ardent wishes, can I succour you,
Much-honoured countrymen! The humblest slave,
Who had but neared our sacred household hearth,
Is dearly welcome in a foreign land:
How with proportioned joy and blessing, then,
Shall I receive the man who doth recall
The image of the heroes, whom I learned
To honour from my parents, and who cheers
My inmost heart with flattering gleams of hope!

ORESTES.

Does prudent forethought prompt thee to conceal
Thy name and race? or may I hope to know
Who, like a heavenly vision meets me thus?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, thou shalt know me. Now conclude the tale
Of which thy brother only told me half:
Relate their end, who, coming home from Troy,
On their own threshold met a doom severe
And most unlooked-for. Young I was in sooth
When first conducted to this foreign shore,
Yet well I recollect the timid glance
Of wonder and amazement which I cast
On those heroic forms. When they went forth,
It seemed as though Olympus had sent down
The glorious figures of a bygone world,
To frighten Ilion; and, above them all,
Great Agamemnon towered preëminent!
Oh, tell me! Fell the hero in his home,
Through Clytemnestra's and Ægisthus' wiles?

ORESTES.

He fell!

IPHIGENIA.

Unblest Mycene! Thus the sons
Of Tantalus, with barbarous hands, have sown
Curse upon curse; and, as the shaken weed
Scatters around a thousand poison-seeds,
So they assassins ceaseless generate,
Their children's children ruthless to destroy. —
Now tell the remnant of thy brother's tale,
Which horror darkly hid from me before.
How did the last descendant of the race, —

The gentle child, to whom the gods assigned
The office of avenger, — how did he
Escape that day of blood? Did equal fate
Around Orestes throw Avernus' net?
Say, was he saved? and is he still alive?
And lives Electra too?

ORESTES.

They both survive.

IPHIGENIA.

Golden Apollo, lend thy choicest beams!
Lay them an offering at the throne of Jove!
For I am poor and dumb!

ORESTES.

If social bonds,
Or ties more close, connect thee with this house,
As this thy rapturous joy betrayeth to me,
Oh, then, rein in thy heart and hold it fast!
For insupportable the sudden plunge
From happiness to sorrow's gloomy depth.
Thou knowest only Agamemnon's death.

IPHIGENIA.

And is not this intelligence enough?

ORESTES.

Half of the horror only hast thou heard.

IPHIGENIA.

What should I fear? Orestes, Electra, live.

ORESTES.

And fearest thou for Clytemnestra nought?

IPHIGENIA.

Her, neither hope nor fear hath power to save.

ORESTES.

She to the land of hope hath bid farewell.

IPHIGENIA.

Did her repentant hand shed her own blood?

ORESTES.

Not so; yet her own blood inflicted death.

IPHIGENIA.

More plainly speak, nor leave me in suspense.
Uncertainty around my anxious head
Her dusky, thousand-folded pinion waves.

ORESTES.

Have, then, the Powers above selected me
To be the herald of a dreadful deed,
Which in the drear and soundless realms of night
I fain would hide for ever? 'Gainst my will
Thy gentle voice constrains me: it demands,
And shall receive, a tale of direst woe.
Electra, on the day when fell her sire,
Her brother from impending doom concealed:
Him Strophius, his father's relative,
Received with kindest care, and reared him up,
With his own son, named Pylades, who soon
Around the stranger twined love's fairest bonds.

And as they grew, within their inmost souls,
There sprang the burning longing to revenge
The monarch's death. Unlooked for, and disguised,
They reached Mycene, feigning to have brought
The mournful tidings of Orestes' death,
Together with his ashes. Them the queen
Gladly receives. Within the house they enter:
Orestes to Electra shows himself;
She fans the fires of vengeance into flame,
Which, in the sacred presence of a mother,
Had burned more dimly. Silently she leads
Her brother to the spot where fell their sire;
Where lurid blood-marks, on the oft-washed floor,
With pallid streaks anticipate revenge.
With fiery eloquence she pictured forth
Each circumstance of that atrocious deed, —
Her own oppressed and miserable life,
The prosperous traitor's insolent demeanour,
The perils threatening Agamemnon's race
From her who had become their stepmother. —
Then in his hand the ancient dagger thrust,
Which often in the house of Tantalus
With savage fury raged, — and by her son
Was Clytemnestra slain.

IPHIGENIA.

Immortal Powers!
Whose pure and blest existence glides away
'Mid ever-shifting clouds, me have ye kept
So many years secluded from the world,
Retained me near yourselves, consigned to me
The childlike task to feed the sacred fire,
And taught my spirit, like the hallowed flame,
With never-clouded brightness to aspire
To your pure mansions, — but at length to feel
With keener woe the horror of my house?

Oh, tell me of the poor unfortunate!
Speak of Orestes!

ORESTES.

Oh, could I speak to tell thee of his death!
Forth from the slain one's spouting blood arose
His mother's ghost;
And to the ancient daughters of the night
Cries, "Let him not escape, — the matricide!
Pursue the victim, dedicate to you!"
They hear, and glare around with hollow eyes,
Like greedy eagles. In their murky dens
They stir themselves; and from the corners creep
Their comrades, dire Remorse and pallid Fear;
Before them fumes a mist of Acheron;
Perplexingly around the murderer's brow
The eternal contemplation of the past
Rolls in its cloudy circles. Once again
The grisly band, commissioned to destroy,
Pollute earth's beautiful and heaven-sown fields,
From which an ancient curse had banished them.
Their rapid feet the fugitive pursue:
They only pause to start a wilder fear.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy one: thy lot resembles his;
Thou feelest what he, poor fugitive, must suffer.

ORESTES.

What sayest thou? Why presume my fate like his?

IPHIGENIA.

A brother's murder weighs upon thy soul:
Thy younger brother told the mournful tale.

ORESTES.

I cannot suffer that thy noble soul
Should by a word of falsehood be deceived.
In cunning rich and practised in deceit,
A web ensnaring let the stranger weave
To snare the stranger's feet: between us twain
Be truth!
I am Orestes! and this guilty head
Is stooping to the tomb, and covets death:
It will be welcome now in any shape.
Whoe'er thou art, for thee and for my friend
I wish deliverance; — I desire it not.
Thou seemest to linger here against thy will:
Contrive some means of flight, and leave me here;
My lifeless corpse hurled headlong from the rock,
My blood shall mingle with the dashing waves,
And bring a curse upon this barbarous shore!
Return together home to lovely Greece,
With joy a new existence to commence.

(ORESTES *retires.*)

IPHIGENIA.

At length, Fulfilment, fairest child of Jove,
Thou dost descend upon me from on high!
How vast thine image! scarce my straining eye
Can reach thy hands, which, filled with golden fruit
And wreaths of blessing, from Olympus' height
Shower treasures down. As by his bounteous gifts
We recognise the monarch (for what seems
To thousands opulence, is nought to him);
So you, ye heavenly Powers, are also known
By bounty long withheld, and wisely planned.
Ye only know what things are good for us:
Ye view the future's wide-extended realm,
While from our eye a dim or starry veil
The prospect shrouds. Calmly ye hear our prayers,

When we like children sue for greater speed.
Not immature ye pluck heaven's golden fruit,
And woe to him who with impatient hand,
His date of joy forestalling, gathers death.
Let not this long-awaited happiness,
Which yet my heart hath scarcely realised,
Like to the shadow of departed friends,
Glide vainly by with triple sorrow fraught!

ORESTES (*returning*).

Dost thou for Pylades and for thyself
Implore the gods, blend not my name with yours:
Thou wilt not save the wretch whom thou wouldst join,
But will participate his curse and woe.

IPHIGENIA.

My destiny is firmly bound to thine.

ORESTES.

No, say not so: alone and unattended
Let me descend to Hades. Though thou shouldst
In thine own veil enwrap the guilty one,
Thou couldst not shroud him from his wakeful foes;
And e'en thy sacred presence, heavenly maid,
But driveth them aside and scares them not.
With brazen, impious feet they dare not tread
Within the precincts of this sacred grove;
Yet in the distance, ever and anon,
I hear their horrid laughter, like the howl
Of famished wolves, beneath the tree wherein
The traveller hides. Without, encamped they lie;
And should I quit this consecrated grove,
Shaking their serpent locks, they would arise,
And, raising clouds of dust on every side,
Ceaseless pursue their miserable prey.

Iphigenia and Her Brother Orestes

Photogravure from a painting by W. V. Kaulbach

IPHIGENIA.

Orestes, canst thou hear a friendly word?

ORESTES.

Reserve it for one favoured by the gods.

IPHIGENIA.

To thee they give anew the light of hope.

ORESTES.

Through clouds and smoke I see the feeble gleam
Of the death-stream which lights me down to hell.

IPHIGENIA.

Hast thou one sister only, thy Electra?

ORESTES.

I knew but one; yet her kind destiny,
Which seemed to us so terrible, betimes
Removed an elder sister from the woe
Which o'er the house of Pelops aye impends.
Oh, cease thy questions, nor thus league thyself
With the Erinnys! still they blow away,
With fiendish joy, the ashes from my soul,
Lest the last embers of the fiery brand,
The fatal heritage of Pelops' house,
Should there be quenched. Must, then, the fire for aye,
Deliberately kindled and supplied
With hellish sulphur, sear my tortured soul?

IPHIGENIA.

I scatter fragrant incense in the flame.
Oh, let the pure, the gentle, breath of love,
Low murmuring, cool thy bosom's fiery glow!
Orestes, fondly loved, — canst thou not hear me?

Hath the terrific Furies' grisly band
Dried up the blood of life within thy veins?
Creeps there, as from the Gorgon's direful head,
A petrifying charm through all thy limbs?
With hollow accents from a mother's blood,
If voices call thee to the shades below,
May not a sister's word, with blessing rife,
Call from Olympus' height help-rendering gods?

ORESTES.

She calls! she calls! — Dost thou desire my doom?
Is there a Fury shrouded in thy form?
Who art thou, that thy voice thus horribly
Can harrow up my bosom's inmost depths?

IPHIGENIA.

Thine inmost heart reveals it. I am she, —
Iphigenia, — look on me, Orestes!

ORESTES.

Thou!

IPHIGENIA.

My own brother.

ORESTES.

Hence, away, begone!
I counsel thee, touch not these fatal locks!
As from Creusa's bridal robe, from me
An inextinguishable fire is kindled.
Leave me! Like Hercules, a death of shame,
Unworthy wretch, locked in myself, I'll die!

IPHIGENIA.

Thou shalt not perish! Would that I might hear
One quiet word from thee! dispel my doubts,
Make sure the bliss I have implored so long.
A wheel of joy and sorrow in my heart
Ceaseless revolves. I from a man unknown
With horror turn, but with resistless might
My inmost heart impels me to my brother.

ORESTES.

Is this Lyæus' temple? Doth the glow
Of holy rage unbridled thus possess
The sacred priestess?

IPHIGENIA.

Hear me! Oh, look up!
See how my heart, which hath been closed so long,
Doth open to the bliss of seeing thee,
The dearest treasure that the world contains, —
Of falling on thy neck, and folding thee
Within my longing arms, which have till now
Met the embraces of the empty wind.
Do not repulse me, — the eternal spring,
Whose crystal waters from Parnassus flow,
Bounds not more gaily on from rock to rock,
Down to the golden vale, than from my heart
The waters of affection freely gush,
And round me form a circling sea of bliss.
Orestes! O my brother!

ORESTES.

Lovely nymph!
Nor thy caresses, nor thyself, I trust:
Diana claims attendants more severe,

And doth avenge her desecrated fane.
Remove thy circling arm! Wilt thou indeed
Safety and love upon a youth bestow,
And fondly tender him earth's fairest joy?
Unto my friend, more worthy than myself,
Impart thy favours; 'mong yon rocks he roves:
Go, seek him, guide him hence, and heed not me.

IPHIGENIA.

Brother, command thyself, and better know
Thy sister, newly found! Misconstrue not
Her pure and heavenly rapture, blaming it
As lustful heat unbridled. O ye gods,
Remove delusion from his rigid gaze,
Lest that this moment, fraught with bliss supreme,
Should make us trebly wretched! She is here,
Thine own, thy long-lost sister! From the altar
The goddess rescued me, and placed me here,
Secure within her consecrated fane —
A captive thou, prepared for sacrifice,
And findest here a sister in the priestess.

ORESTES.

Unblessèd one! So may the radiant sun
The final horror of our house behold!
Is not Electra here? That she with us
May also perish, nor her life prolong
For heavier destiny and direr woe.
'Tis well — I follow, priestess! Fratricide
Is an old custom of our ancient house;
And you, ye gods, I thank, that ye resolve
Childless to root me hence. Thee let me counsel
To view too fondly neither sun nor stars.
Come, follow to the gloomy realms below!
As dragons, gendered in the sulphur pool,

Swallow each other with voracious rage,
So our accursed race destroys itself.
Childless and guiltless come below with me!
There's pity in thy look! oh, gaze not so! —
'Twas with such looks that Clytemnestra sought
An entrance to her son Orestes' heart,
And yet his upraised arm her bosom pierced.
His mother fell! — Appear, indignant shade!
Within the circle step, ye fiends of hell,
Be present at the welcome spectacle,
The last, most horrible, that ye prepare!
Nor hate, nor vengeance whets the poniard now:
A loving sister is constrained to deal
The fatal blow. Weep not! Thou hast no guilt.
From earliest infancy I nought have loved,
As thee I could have loved, my sister. Come,
The weapon raise, spare not, this bosom rend,
And make an outlet for its boiling streams!

(*He sinks exhausted.*)

IPHIGENIA.

Alone I cannot bear this bliss and woe.
Where art thou, Pylades? Thine aid I need.

(IPHIGENIA *retires.*)

Scene II.

ORESTES (*recovering from his swoon and standing up*).

Give yet another! reach from Lethe's stream
The last reviving draught of cool refreshment!
Soon shall its waters in my bosom still
Life's fitful fever; and my spirit then
Adown oblivion's stream shall glide to you,
Ye spirits shrouded in eternal mist.

With tranquil pleasure in your deep repose,
A weary son of earth may lave his soul! —
What whispering sounds pervade the dreary grove?
What hollow murmurs haunt its twilight gloom? —
They gather round to view the stranger guest!
Who are yon troop in high communion met,
Like an assembled family of princes?
They mingle peacefully, of every age,
Of either sex: godlike, of kindred mould,
Appear the gliding figures. Yes, 'tis they,
The fathers of my race! With Atreus,
In friendly converse glides Thyestes' shade;
And children playfully around them sport.
Is there no enmity among you now?
And is revenge extinguished with the sun?
So am I also welcome, and may hope
To mingle in your solemn company.
Welcome, my sires! Orestes bids you hail!
The seed that ye have sowed, that hath he reaped.
Laden with curses he descends to you.
But burdens here are lighter far to bear.
Receive him, oh, receive him in your circle!
Thee, Atreus, I revere, and thee, Thyestes:
Here all are free from enmity and hate. —
Show me my father, whom I only once
In life beheld. —Art thou my father, thou,
My mother leading thus familiarly?
Dares Clytemnestra reach her hand to thee?
Then may Orestes also draw near her,
And say, Behold thy son! — my ancestors,
Behold your son, and bid him welcome here.
Among the sons of ancient Tantalus,
A kind salute on earth was murder's watchword;
And all their joys commence beyond the grave.
Ye welcome me! Ye bid me join your circle!
Oh, lead me to my honoured ancestor!
Where is our aged sire? Let me behold

The dear, the venerable head of him
Who with the immortal gods in council sat.
Ye seem to shudder, and to turn away!
What may this mean? Suffers the godlike man?
Alas! the mighty gods, with ruthless hate,
To his heroic breast, with brazen chains,
Have cruel pangs indissolubly bound.

Scene III. — Orestes, Iphigenia, Pylades.

ORESTES.

How! Are ye come already here below?
Welcome, my sister! Still Electra fails:
Oh, that some kindly god, with gentle arrow,
Her too, full speedily, would downward send!
Thee, hapless friend, I must compassionate!
Come with me! Come! To Pluto's gloomy throne,
There to salute our hosts like stranger guests.

IPHIGENIA.

Celestial pair, who from the realms above
By night and day shed down the beauteous light
To cheer mankind, but who may not illume
Departed spirits, save a mortal pair,
A brother's and a sister's anguish pity!
For thou, Diana, lovest thy gentle brother
Beyond what earth and heaven can offer thee;
And dost, with quiet yearning, ever turn
Thy virgin face to his eternal light.
Let not my only brother, found so late,
Rave in the darkness of insanity!
And is thy will, when thou didst here conceal me,
At length fulfilled, — wouldst thou to me through him,
To him through me, thy gracious aid extend, —

Oh, free him from the fetters of this curse,
Lest vainly pass the precious hours of safety.

PYLADES.

Dost thou not know us, and this sacred grove,
And this blest light, which shines not on the dead?
Dost thou not feel thy sister and thy friend,
Who hold the living in their firm embrace?
Us firmly grasp: we are not empty shades.
Mark well my words! Collect thy scattered thoughts!
Attend! Each moment is of priceless worth;
And our return hangs on a slender thread,
Which, as it seems, some gracious fate doth spin.

ORESTES (*to* IPHIGENIA).

My sister, let me for the first time taste,
With open heart, pure joy within thine arms!
Ye gods, who charge the heavy clouds with dread,
And, sternly gracious, send the long-sought rain
With thunder and the rush of mighty winds,
A horrid deluge on the trembling earth,
Yet dissipate at length man's dread suspense,
Exchanging timid wonder's anxious gaze
For grateful looks and joyous songs of praise,
When, in each sparkling drop which gems the leaves,
Apollo, thousand-fold, reflects his beam,
And Iris colours with a magic hand
The dusty texture of the parting clouds,
Oh, let me also in my sister's arms,
And on the bosom of my friend, enjoy
With grateful thanks the bliss ye now bestow;
My heart assures me that your curses cease.
The dread Eumenides at length retire:
The brazen gates of Tartarus I hear
Behind them closing with a thunderous clang.
A quickening odour from the earth ascends,

Inviting me to chase, upon its plains,
The joys of life and deeds of high emprise.

PYLADES.

Lose not the moments which are limited!
The favouring gale, which swells our parting sail,
Must to Olympus waft our perfect joy.
Quick counsel and resolve the time demands.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

IPHIGENIA.

When the Powers on high decree
For a feeble child of earth
Dire perplexity and woe,
And his spirit doom to pass
With tumult wild from joy to grief,
And back again from grief to joy,
In fearful alternation,
They in mercy then provide,
In the precincts of his home,
Or upon the distant shore,
That to him may never fail
Ready help in hours of need,
A tranquil, faithful friend.
Oh, bless, ye heavenly Powers, our Pylades,
And whatsoever he may undertake!
He is in fight the vigorous arm of youth,
And his the thoughtful eye of age in counsel:
For tranquil is his soul; he guardeth there
Of calm a sacred and exhaustless dower,
And from its depths, in rich supply, outpours

Comfort and counsel for the sore distressed.
He tore me from my brother, upon whom,
With fond amaze, I gazed and gazed again:
I could not realise my happiness,
Nor loose him from my arms, and heeded not
The danger's near approach that threatens us.
To execute their project of escape,
They hastened to the sea, where, in a bay,
Their comrades in the vessel lie concealed,
Waiting a signal. Me they have supplied
With artful answers, should the monarch send
To urge the sacrifice. Alas! I see
I must consent to follow like a child:
I have not learned deception, nor the art
To gain with crafty wiles my purposes.
Detested falsehood! it doth not relieve
The breast like words of truth: it comforts not,
But is a torment in the forger's heart,
And, like an arrow which a god directs,
Flies back and wounds the archer. Through my heart
One fear doth chase another: perhaps with rage,
Again on the unconsecrated shore,
The Furies' grisly band my brother seize.
Perchance they are surprised. Methinks I hear
The tread of armèd men. A messenger
Is coming from the king, with hasty steps.
How throbs my heart, how troubled is my soul,
Now that I gaze upon the face of one
Whom with a word untrue I must encounter!

Scene II. — Iphigenia, Arkas.

ARKAS.

Priestess, with speed conclude the sacrifice!
Impatiently the king and people wait.

IPHIGENIA.

I had performed my duty and thy will,
Had not an unforeseen impediment
The execution of my purpose thwarted.

ARKAS.

What is it that obstructs the king's commands?

IPHIGENIA.

Chance, which from mortals will not brook control.

ARKAS.

Possess me with the reason, that with speed
I may inform the king, who hath decreed
The death of both.

IPHIGENIA.

The gods have not decreed it.
The elder of these men doth bear the guilt
Of kindred murder: on his steps attend
The dread Erinnys. In the inner fane
They seized upon their prey, polluting thus
The holy sanctuary. I hasten now,
Together with my virgin-train, to bathe
The goddess' image in the sea, and there
With solemn rites its purity restore.
Let none presume our silent march to follow!

ARKAS.

This hindrance to the monarch I'll announce:
Commence not thou the rite till he permit.

IPHIGENIA.

The priestess interferes alone in this.

ARKAS.

An incident so strange the king should know.

IPHIGENIA.

Here nor his counsel nor command avails.

ARKAS.

Oft are the great consulted out of form.

IPHIGENIA.

Do not insist on what I must refuse.

ARKAS.

A needful and a just demand refuse not.

IPHIGENIA.

I yield, if thou delay not.

ARKAS.

I with speed
Will bear these tidings to the camp, and soon
Acquaint thee, priestess, with the king's reply.
There is a message I would gladly bear him, —
'Twould quickly banish all perplexity:
Thou didst not heed thy faithful friend's advice.

IPHIGENIA.

I willingly have done whate'er I could.

ARKAS.

E'en now 'tis not too late to change thy purpose.

IPHIGENIA.

To do so is, alas! beyond our power.

ARKAS.

What thou wouldst shun, thou deemest impossible.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy wish doth make thee deem it possible.

ARKAS.

Wilt thou so calmly venture everything?

IPHIGENIA.

My fate I have committed to the gods.

ARKAS.

The gods are wont to save by human means.

IPHIGENIA.

By their appointment everything is done.

ARKAS.

Believe me, all doth now depend on thee.
The irritated temper of the king
Alone condemns these men to bitter death.
The soldiers from the cruel sacrifice
And bloody service long have been disused;
Nay, many, whom their adverse fortunes cast
In foreign regions, there themselves have felt
How godlike to the exiled wanderer
The friendly countenance of man appears.
Do not deprive us of thy gentle aid!
With ease thou canst thy sacred task fulfil;
For nowhere doth benignity, which comes
In human form from heaven, so quickly gain
An empire o'er the heart, as where a race,
Gloomy and savage, full of life and power,

Without external guidance, and oppressed
With vague forebodings, bear life's heavy load.

IPHIGENIA.

Shake not my spirit, which thou canst not bend
According to thy will.

ARKAS.

While there is time,
Nor labour nor persuasion shall be spared.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy labour but occasions pain to me;
Both are in vain: therefore, I pray, depart.

ARKAS.

I summon pain to aid me: 'tis a friend
Who counsels wisely.

IPHIGENIA.

Though it shakes my soul,
It doth not banish thence my strong repugnance.

ARKAS.

Can, then, a gentle soul repugnance feel
For benefits bestowed by one so noble?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, when the donor, for those benefits,
Instead of gratitude, demands myself.

ARKAS.

Who no affection feels doth never want
Excuses. To the king I will relate

What hath befallen. Oh that in thy soul
Thou wouldst revolve his noble conduct to thee
Since thy arrival to the present day!

Scene III.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

These words at an unseasonable hour
Produce a strong revulsion in my breast:
I am alarmed! — For as the rushing tide
In rapid currents eddies o'er the rocks
Which lie among the sand upon the shore,
E'en so a stream of joy o'erwhelmed my soul.
I grasped what had appeared impossible.
It was as though another gentle cloud
Around me lay, to raise me from the earth,
And rock my spirit in the same sweet sleep
Which the kind goddess shed around my brow,
What time her circling arm from danger snatched me.
My brother forcibly engrossed my heart;
I listened only to his friend's advice;
My soul rushed eagerly to rescue them;
And as the mariner with joy surveys
The lessening breakers of a desert isle,
So Tauris lay behind me. But the voice
Of faithful Arkas wakes me from my dream,
Reminding me that those whom I forsake
Are also men. Deceit doth now become
Doubly detested. O my soul, be still!
Beginnest thou now to tremble and to doubt?
Thy lonely shelter on the firm-set earth
Must thou abandon, and, embarked once more,
At random drift upon tumultuous waves,
A stranger to thyself and to the world?

Scene IV. — Iphigenia, Pylades.

PYLADES.

Where is she? that my words with speed may tell
The joyful tidings of our near escape!

IPHIGENIA.

Oppressed with gloomy care, I much require
The certain comfort thou dost promise me.

PYLADES.

Thy brother is restored! The rocky paths
Of this unconsecrated shore we trod
In friendly converse; while behind us lay,
Unmarked by us, the consecrated grove;
And ever with increasing glory shone
The fire of youth around his noble brow.
Courage and hope his glowing eye inspired;
And his exultant heart resigned itself
To the delight, the joy, of rescuing
Thee, his deliverer, also me, his friend.

IPHIGENIA.

The gods shower blessings on thee, Pylades!
And from those lips which breathe such welcome news,
Be the sad note of anguish never heard!

PYLADES.

I bring yet more; for fortune, like a prince,
Comes not alone, but well accompanied.
Our friends and comrades we have also found.
Within a bay they had concealed the ship,

And mournful sat expectant. They beheld
Thy brother, and a joyous shout upraised,
Imploring him to haste the parting hour.
Each hand impatient longed to grasp the oar;
While from the shore a gently murmuring breeze,
Perceived by all, unfurled its wings auspicious.
Let us then hasten: guide me to the fane,
That I may tread the sanctuary, and win
With sacred awe the goal of our desires.
I can unaided on my shoulder bear
The goddess' image: how I long to feel
The precious burden!

(*While speaking the last words, he approaches the Temple, without perceiving that he is not followed by* IPHIGENIA: *at length he turns round.*)

Why thus lingering stand?
Why art thou silent? wherefore thus confused?
Doth some new obstacle oppose our bliss?
Inform me, hast thou to the king announced
The prudent message we agreed upon?

IPHIGENIA.

I have, dear Pylades; yet wilt thou chide.
Thy very aspect is a mute reproach.
The royal messenger arrived; and I,
According to thy counsel, framed my speech.
He seemed surprised, and urgently besought,
That to the monarch I should first announce
The rite unusual, and attend his will.
I now await the messenger's return.

PYLADES.

Danger again doth hover o'er our heads!
Alas! Why hast thou failed to shroud thyself
Within the veil of sacerdotal rites?

IPHIGENIA.

I never have employed them as a veil.

PYLADES.

Pure soul! thy scruples will destroy alike
Thyself and us. Why did I not foresee
Such an emergency, and tutor thee
This counsel also wisely to elude?

IPHIGENIA.

Chide only me, for mine alone the blame.
Yet other answer could I not return
To him, who strongly and with reason urged
What my own heart acknowledged to be right.

PYLADES.

The danger thickens; but let us be firm,
Nor with incautious haste betray ourselves.
Calmly await the messenger's return,
And then stand fast, whatever his reply;
For the appointment of such sacred rites
Doth to the priestess, not the king, belong.
Should he demand the stranger to behold,
Who is by madness heavily oppressed,
Evasively pretend, that in the fane,
Well guarded, thou retainest him and me.
Thus you secure us time to fly with speed,
Bearing the sacred treasure from this race,
Unworthy its possession. Phœbus sends
Auspicious omens, and fulfils his word,
Ere we the first conditions have performed.
Free is Orestes, from the curse absolved!
Oh, with the freed one, to the rocky isle
Where dwells the god, waft us, propitious gales!
Thence to Mycene, that she may revive;

That from the ashes of the extinguished hearth,
The household gods may joyously arise,
And beauteous fire illumine their abode!
Thy hand from golden censers first shall strew
The fragrant incense. O'er that threshold thou
Shalt life and blessing once again dispense,
The curse atone, and all thy kindred grace
With the fresh bloom of renovated life.

IPHIGENIA.

As doth the flower revolve to meet the sun,
Once more my spirit to sweet comfort turns,
Struck by thy words' invigorating ray.
How dear the counsel of a present friend,
Lacking whose godlike power, the lonely one
In silence droops! for, locked within his breast,
Slowly are ripened purpose and resolve,
Which friendship's genial warmth had soon matured.

PYLADES.

Farewell! I haste to reassure our friends,
Who anxiously await us: then with speed
I will return, and, hid within the brake,
Attend thy signal. — Wherefore, all at once,
Doth anxious thought o'ercloud thy brow serene?

IPHIGENIA.

Forgive me! As light clouds athwart the sun,
So cares and fears float darkling o'er my soul.

PYLADES.

Oh, banish fear! With danger it hath formed
A close alliance, — they are constant friends.

IPHIGENIA.

It is an honest scruple, which forbids
That I should cunningly deceive the king,
And plunder him who was my second father.

PYLADES.

Him thou dost fly, who would have slain thy brother.

IPHIGENIA.

To me, at least, he hath been ever kind.

PYLADES.

What fate commands is not ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Alas! it still remains ingratitude:
Necessity alone can justify it.

PYLADES.

Thee, before gods and men, it justifies.

IPHIGENIA.

But my own heart is still unsatisfied.

PYLADES.

Scruples too rigid are a cloak for pride.

IPHIGENIA.

I cannot argue, I can only feel.

PYLADES.

Conscious of right, thou shouldst respect thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

Then only doth the heart know perfect ease,
When not a stain pollutes it.

PYLADES.

In this fane
Pure hast thou kept thy heart. Life teaches us
To be less strict with others and ourselves:
Thou'lt learn the lesson too. So wonderful
Is human nature, and its varied ties
Are so involved and complicate, that none
May hope to keep his inmost spirit pure,
And walk without perplexity through life.
Nor are we called upon to judge ourselves
With circumspection to pursue his path,
Is the immediate duty of a man;
For seldom can he rightly estimate
Or his past conduct or his present deeds.

IPHIGENIA.

Almost thou dost persuade me to consent.

PYLADES.

Needs there persuasion when no choice is granted?
To save thyself, thy brother, and a friend,
One path presents itself; and canst thou ask
If we shall follow it?

IPHIGENIA.

Still let me pause,
For such injustice thou couldst not thyself
Calmly return for benefits received.

PYLADES.

If we should perish, bitter self-reproach,
Forerunner of despair, will be thy portion.

It seems thou art not used to suffer much,
When, to escape so great calamity,
Thou canst refuse to utter one false word.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, that I bore within a manly heart!
Which, when it hath conceived a bold resolve,
'Gainst every other voice doth close itself.

PYLADES.

In vain thou dost refuse: with iron hand
Necessity commands; her stern decree
Is law supreme, to which the gods themselves
Must yield submission. In dread silence rules
The uncounselled sister of eternal fate.
What she appoints thee to endure, — endure;
What to perform, — perform. The rest thou knowest.
Ere long I will return, and then receive
The seal of safety from thy sacred hand.

Scene V.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

I must obey him, for I see my friends
Beset with peril. Yet my own sad fate
Doth with increasing anguish move my heart.
May I no longer feed the silent hope
Which in my solitude I fondly cherished?
Shall the dire curse eternally endure?
And shall our fated race ne'er rise again
With blessings crowned? — All mortal things decay!
The noblest powers, the purest joys of life,
At length subside, — then, wherefore not the curse?
And have I vainly hoped, that guarded here,
Secluded from the fortunes of my race,

I, with pure heart and hands, some future day,
Might cleanse the deep defilement of our house?
Scarce was my brother in my circling arms,
From raging madness suddenly restored,
Scarce had the ship, long prayed for, neared the strand,
Once more to waft me to my native shores,
When unrelenting fate, with iron hand,
A double crime enjoins; commanding me
To steal the image, sacred and revered,
Confided to my care, and him deceive
To whom I owe my life and destiny.
Let not abhorrence spring within my heart!
Nor the old Titan's hate toward you, ye gods,
Infix its vulture talons in my breast!
Save me, and save your image in my soul!

An ancient song comes back upon mine ear, —
I had forgotten it, and willingly, —
The Parcæ's song, which horribly they sang,
What time, hurled headlong from his golden seat,
Fell Tantalus. They with their noble friend
Keen anguish suffered: savage was their breast,
And horrible their song. In days gone by,
When we were children, oft our ancient nurse
Would sing it to us; and I marked it well.

Oh, fear the immortals,
Ye children of men!
Eternal dominion
They hold in their hands,
And o'er their wide empire
Wield absolute sway.

Whom they have exalted
Let him fear them most!
Around golden tables,

On cliffs and clouds resting,
The seats are prepared.

If contest ariseth,
The guests are hurled headlong
Disgraced and dishonoured,
To gloomy abysses,
And, fettered in darkness,
Await, with vain longing,
A juster decree.

But in feasts everlasting,
Around the gold tables,
Still dwell the immortals.
From mountain to mountain
They stride; while, ascending
From fathomless chasms,
The breath of the Titans,
Half-stifled with anguish,
Like volumes of incense
Fumes up to the skies.

From races ill-fated,
Their aspect joy-bringing,
Oft turn the celestials,
And shun in the children
To gaze on the features,
Once-loved and still speaking,
Of their mighty sire.

So chanted the Parcæ:
The banished one hearkens
The song; the hoar captive,
Immured in his dungeon,
His children's doom ponders,
And boweth his head.

ACT V.

Scene I. — Thoas, Arkas.

ARKAS.

I own I am perplexed, and scarcely know
'Gainst whom to point the shaft of my suspicion, —
Whether the priestess aids the captives' flight,
Or they themselves clandestinely contrive it.
'Tis rumoured that the ship which brought them here
Is lurking somewhere in a bay concealed.
This stranger's madness, these new lustral rites,
The specious pretext for delay, excite
Mistrust, and call aloud for vigilance.

THOAS.

Summon the priestess to attend me here;
Then go with speed, and strictly search the shore,
From yonder headland to Diana's grove;
Forbear to violate its sacred depths;
A watchful ambush set; attack and seize,
According to your wont, whome'er ye find.
(Arkas *retires.*)

Scene II.

THOAS (*alone*).

Fierce anger rages in my riven breast,
First against her, whom I esteemed so pure;
Then 'gainst myself, whose foolish lenity
Hath fashioned her for treason. Man is soon
Inured to slavery, and quickly learns
Submission, when of freedom quite deprived.

If she had fallen in the savage hands
Of my rude sires, and had their holy rage
Forborne to slay her, grateful for her life,
She would have recognised her destiny,
Have shed before the shrine the strangers' blood,
And duty named what was necessity.
Now my forbearance in her breast allures
Audacious wishes. Vainly I had hoped
To bind her to me: rather she contrives
To shape an independent destiny.
She won my heart through flattery, and, now
That I oppose her, seeks to gain her ends
By fraud and cunning, and my kindness deems
A worthless and prescriptive property.

Scene III. — Iphigenia, Thoas.

IPHIGENIA.

Me hast thou summoned? wherefore art thou here?

THOAS.

Wherefore delay the sacrifice? inform me.

IPHIGENIA.

I have acquainted Arkas with the reasons.

THOAS.

From thee I wish to hear them more at large.

IPHIGENIA.

The goddess for reflection grants thee time.

THOAS.

To thee this time seems also opportune.

IPHIGENIA.

If to this cruel deed thy heart is steeled,
Thou shouldst not come! A king, who meditates
A deed inhuman, may find slaves enow,
Willing for hire to bear one-half the curse,
And leave the monarch's presence undefiled.
Enrapt in gloomy clouds he forges death:
Flaming destruction then his ministers
Hurl down upon his wretched victim's head;
While he abideth high above the storm,
Calm and untroubled, an impassive god.

THOAS.

A wild song, priestess, issued from thy lips.

IPHIGENIA.

No priestess, king, but Agamemnon's daughter!
While yet unknown, thou didst respect my words!
A princess now, — and thinkest thou to command me?
From youth I have been tutored to obey,
My parents first and then the deity;
And, thus obeying, ever hath my soul
Known sweetest freedom. But nor then nor now
Have I been taught compliance with the voice
And savage mandates of a man.

THOAS.

Not I:
An ancient law doth thy obedience claim.

IPHIGENIA.

Our passions eagerly catch hold of laws
Which they can wield as weapons. But to me
Another law, one far more ancient, speaks,

And doth command me to withstand thee, king!
That law declaring sacred every stranger.

THOAS.

These men, methinks, lie very near thy heart,
When sympathy with them can lead thee thus
To violate discretion's primal law,
That those in power should never be provoked.

IPHIGENIA.

Speaking or silent, thou canst always know
What is, and ever must be, in my heart.
Doth not remembrance of a common doom
To soft compassion melt the hardest heart?
How much more mine? in them I see myself.
I trembling kneeled before the altar once,
And solemnly the shade of early death
Environed me. Aloft the knife was raised
To pierce my bosom, throbbing with warm life;
A dizzy horror overwhelmed my soul;
My eyes grew dim; — I found myself in safety.
Are we not bound to render the distressed
The gracious kindness from the gods received?
Thou knowest we are, and yet wilt thou compel me?

THOAS.

Obey thine office, priestess, not the king.

IPHIGENIA.

Cease! nor thus seek to cloak the savage force
Which triumphs o'er a woman's feebleness.
Though woman, I am born as free as man.
Did Agamemnon's son before thee stand,

And thou requiredst what became him not,
His arm and trusty weapon would defend
His bosom's freedom. I have only words;
But it becomes a noble-minded man
To treat with due respect the words of woman.

THOAS.

I more respect them than a brother's sword.

IPHIGENIA.

Uncertain ever is the chance of arms;
No prudent warrior doth despise his foe;
Nor yet defenceless 'gainst severity
Hath nature left the weak, — she gives him craft
And wily cunning: artful he delays,
Evades, eludes, and finally escapes.
Such arms are justified by violence.

THOAS.

But circumspection countervails deceit.

IPHIGENIA.

Which a pure spirit doth abbor to use.

THOAS.

Do not incautiously condemn thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, couldst thou see the struggle of my soul,
Courageously to ward the first attack
Of an unhappy doom, which threatens me!
Do I, then, stand before thee weaponless?

Prayer, lovely prayer, fair branch in woman's hand,
More potent far than instruments of war,
Thou dost thrust back. What now remains for me
Wherewith my inborn freedom to defend?
Must I implore a miracle from heaven?
Is there no power within my spirit's depths?

THOAS.

Extravagant thy interest in the fate
Of these two strangers. Tell me who they are
For whom thy heart is thus so deeply moved.

IPHIGENIA.

They are — they seem at least — I think them Greeks.

THOAS.

Thy countrymen: no doubt they have renewed
The pleasing picture of return.

IPHIGENIA (*after a pause*).

Doth man
Lay undisputed claim to noble deeds?
Doth he alone to his heroic breast
Clasp the impossible? What call we great?
What deeds, though oft narrated, still uplift
With shuddering horror the narrator's soul,
But those which, with improbable success,
The valiant have attempted? Shall the man
Who all alone steals on his foes by night,
And, raging like an unexpected fire,
Destroys the slumbering host, and, pressed at length
By roused opponents on his foemen's steeds,
Retreats with booty, be alone extolled?
Or he who, scorning safety, boldly roams

Through woods and dreary wilds, to scour the land
Of thieves and robbers? Is nought left for us?
Must gentle woman quite forego her nature,
Force against force employ, — like Amazons, —
Usurp the sword from man, and bloodily
Revenge oppression? In my heart I feel
The stirrings of a noble enterprise;
But if I fail — severe reproach, alas!
And bitter misery will be my doom.
Thus on my knees I supplicate the gods!
Oh, are ye truthful, as men say ye are,
Now prove it by your countenance and aid!
Honour the truth in me! Attend, O king!
A secret plot deceitfully is laid:
Touching the captives thou dost ask in vain;
They have departed hence, and seek their friends,
Who, with the ship, await them on the shore.
The eldest, — whom dire madness lately seized,
And hath abandoned now, — he is Orestes,
My brother, and the other Pylades,
His early friend and faithful confidant.
From Delphi, Phœbus sent them to this shore
With a divine command to steal away
The image of Diana, and to him
Bear back the sister thither; and for this
He promised to the blood-stained matricide,
The Fury-haunted son, deliverance.
I have surrendered now into thy hands
The remnants of the house of Tantalus.
Destroy us — if thou canst.

THOAS.

And dost thou think
That the uncultured Scythian will attend
The voice of truth and of humanity
Which Atreus, the Greek, heard not?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis heard
By every one, born 'neath whatever clime,
Within whose bosom flows the stream of life,
Pure and unhindered. — What thy thought? O king!
What silent purpose broods in thy deep soul?
Is it destruction? Let me perish first!
For now, deliverance hopeless, I perceive
The dreadful peril into which I have
With rash precipitancy plunged my friends.
Alas! I soon shall see them bound before me!
How to my brother shall I say farewell? —
I, the unhappy author of his death.
Ne'er can I gaze again in his dear eyes!

THOAS.

The traitors have contrived a cunning web,
And cast it round thee, who, secluded long,
Givest willing credence to thine own desires.

IPHIGENIA.

No, no! I'd pledge my life these men are true.
And shouldst thou find them otherwise, O king,
Then let them perish both, and cast me forth,
That on some rock-girt island's dreary shore
I may atone my folly! Are they true,
And is this man indeed my dear Orestes,
My brother, long implored, release us both,
And o'er us stretch the kind protecting arm
Which long hath sheltered me. My noble sire
Fell through his consort's guilt, — she by her son:
On him alone the hope of Atreus' race
Doth now repose. Oh, with pure heart, pure hand,
Let me depart to purify our house!
Yes, thou wilt keep thy promise: thou didst swear,
That, were a safe return provided me,

I should be free to go. The hour is come.
A king doth never grant like common men,
Merely to gain a respite from petition;
Nor promise what he hopes will ne'er be claimed.
Then first he feels his dignity supreme
When he can make the long-expecting happy.

THOAS.

As fire opposes water, and doth seek
With hissing rage to overcome its foe,
So doth my anger strive against thy words.

IPHIGENIA.

Let mercy, like the consecrated flame
Of silent sacrifice, encircled round
With songs of gratitude and joy and praise,
Above the tumult gently rise to heaven.

THOAS.

How often hath this voice assuaged my soul?

IPHIGENIA.

Extend thy hand to me in sign of peace.

THOAS.

Large thy demand within so short a time.

IPHIGENIA.

Beneficence doth no reflection need.

THOAS.

'Tis needed oft, for evil springs from good.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis doubt which good doth oft to evil turn.
Consider not: act as thy feelings prompt thee.

Scene IV. — Orestes (*armed*), Iphigenia, Thoas.

ORESTES (*addressing his followers*).

Redouble your exertions! hold them back!
Few moments will suffice: maintain your ground,
And keep a passage open to the ship
For me and for my sister.
(*To* Iphigenia, *without perceiving* Thoas.)
Come with speed!
We are betrayed, — brief time remains for flight.
(*He perceives the king.*)

Thoas (*laying his hand on his sword*).

None in my presence with impunity
His naked weapon wears.

IPHIGENIA.

Do not profane
Diana's sanctuary with rage and blood.
Command your people to forbear awhile,
And listen to the priestess, to the sister.

ORESTES.

Say, who is he that threatens us?

IPHIGENIA.

In him
Revere the king, who was my second father.
Forgive me, brother, that my childlike heart
Hath placed our fate thus wholly in his hands.

I have betrayed your meditated flight,
And thus from treachery redeemed my soul.

ORESTES.

Will he permit our peaceable return?

IPHIGENIA.

Thy gleaming sword forbids me to reply.

ORESTES (*sheathing his sword*).

Then, speak! thou seest I listen to thy words.

Scene V. — Orestes, Iphigenia, Thoas.

Enter Pylades, *soon after him* Arkas, *both with drawn swords.*

PYLADES.

Do not delay! our friends are putting forth
Their final strength, and, yielding step by step,
Are slowly driven backward to the sea. —
A conference of princes find I here?
Is this the sacred person of the king?

ARKAS.

Calmly, as doth become thee, thou dost stand,
O king, surrounded by thine enemies!
Soon their temerity shall be chastised:
Their yielding followers fly, — their ship is ours:
Speak but the word, and it is wrapt in flames.

THOAS.

Go, and command my people to forbear!
Let none annoy the foe while we confer.

(Arkas *retires.*)

ORESTES.

I willingly consent. Go, Pylades!
Collect the remnant of our friends, and wait
The appointed issue of our enterprise.

(PYLADES *retires.*)

SCENE VI. — IPHIGENIA, THOAS, ORESTES.

IPHIGENIA.

Relieve my cares ere ye begin to speak.
I fear contention, if thou wilt not hear
The voice of equity, O king, — if thou
Wilt not, my brother, curb thy headstrong youth!

THOAS.

I, as becomes the elder, check my rage.
Now answer me: how dost thou prove thyself
The priestess' brother, Agamemnon's son?

ORESTES.

Behold the sword with which the hero slew
The valiant Trojans. From his murderer
I took the weapon, and implored the gods
To grant me Agamemnon's mighty arm,
Success, and valour, with a death more noble.
Select one of the leaders of thy host,
And place the best as my opponent here.
Where'er on earth the sons of heroes dwell,
This boon is to the stranger ne'er refused.

THOAS.

This privilege hath ancient custom here
To strangers ne'er accorded.

ORESTES.

Then from us
Commence the novel custom! A whole race
In imitation soon will consecrate
Its monarch's noble action into law.
Nor let me only for our liberty, —
Let me, a stranger, for all strangers fight.
If I should fall, my doom be also theirs;
But, if kind fortune crown me with success,
Let none e'er tread this shore, and fail to meet
The beaming eye of sympathy and love,
Or unconsoled depart!

THOAS.

Thou dost not seem
Unworthy of thy boasted ancestry.
Great is the number of the valiant men
Who wait upon me; but I will myself,
Although advanced in years, oppose the foe,
And am prepared to try the chance of arms.

IPHIGENIA.

No, no! such bloody proofs are not required.
Unhand thy weapon, king! my lot consider;
Rash combat oft immortalises man;
If he should fall, he is renowned in song:
But after-ages reckon not the tears
Which ceaseless the forsaken woman sheds;
And poets tell not of the thousand nights
Consumed in weeping, and the dreary days,
Wherein her anguished soul, a prey to grief,
Doth vainly yearn to call her loved one back.
Fear warned me to beware lest robbers' wiles
Might lure me from this sanctuary, and then
Betray me into bondage. Anxiously

I questioned them, each circumstance explored,
Demanded proofs; now is my heart assured.
See here, the mark on his right hand impressed
As of three stars, which on his natal day
Were by the priest declared to indicate
Some dreadful deed therewith to be performed.
And then this scar, which doth his eyebrow cleave,
Redoubles my conviction. When a child,
Electra, rash and inconsiderate, —
Such was her nature, — loosed him from her arms:
He fell against a tripos. Oh, 'tis he! —
Shall I adduce the likeness to his sire,
Or the deep rapture of my inmost heart,
In further token of assurance, king?

THOAS.

E'en though thy words had banished every doubt,
And I had curbed the anger in my breast,
Still must our arms decide. I see no peace.
Their purpose, as thou didst thyself confess,
Was to deprive me of Diana's image.
And think ye I will look contented on?
The Greeks are wont to cast a longing eye
Upon the treasures of barbarians, —
A golden fleece, good steeds, or daughters fair; —
But force and guile not always have availed
To lead them, with their booty, safely home.

ORESTES.

The image shall not be a cause of strife!
We now perceive the error which the god,
Our journey here commanding, like a veil,
Threw o'er our minds. His counsel I implored,
To free me from the Furies' grisly band.
He answered, "Back to Greece the sister bring,

Who in the sanctuary on Tauris' shore
Unwillingly abides; so ends the curse!"
To Phœbus' sister we applied the words,
And he referred to thee. The bonds severe,
Which held thee from us, holy one, are rent;
And thou art ours once more. At thy blest touch,
I felt myself restored. Within thine arms,
Madness once more around me coiled its folds,
Crushing the marrow in my frame, and then
For ever, like a serpent, fled to hell.
Through thee the daylight gladdens me anew:
The counsel of the goddess now shines forth
In all its beauty and beneficence.
Like to a sacred image, unto which
An oracle immutably hath bound
A city's welfare, thee she bore away,
Protectress of our house, and guarded here
Within this holy stillness, to become
A blessing to thy brother and thy race.
Now when each passage to escape seems closed,
And safety hopeless, thou dost give us all.
O king, incline thine heart to thoughts of peace!
Let her fulfil her mission, and complete
The consecration of our father's house;
Me to their purified abode restore,
And place upon my brow the ancient crown!
Requite the blessing which her presence brought thee,
And let me now my nearer right enjoy!
Cunning and force, the proudest boast of man,
Fade in the lustre of her perfect truth;
Nor unrequited will a noble mind
Leave confidence, so childlike and so pure.

IPHIGENIA.

Think on thy promise: let thy heart be moved
By what a true and honest tongue hath spoken!

Look on us, king! an opportunity
For such a noble deed not oft occurs.
Refuse thou canst not, — give thy quick consent.

THOAS.

Then, go!

IPHIGENIA.

Not so, my king! I cannot part
Without thy blessing, or in anger from thee:
Banish us not! the sacred right of guests
Still let us claim: so not eternally
Shall we be severed. Honoured and beloved
As mine own father was, art thou by me;
And this impression in my soul abides.
Let but the least among thy people bring
Back to mine ear the tones I heard from thee,
Or should I on the humblest see thy garb,
I will with joy receive him as a god,
Prepare his couch myself, beside our hearth
Invite him to a seat, and only ask
Touching thy fate and thee. Oh, may the gods
To thee the merited reward impart
Of all thy kindness and benignity!
Farewell! Oh, turn thou not away, but give
One kindly word of parting in return!
So shall the wind more gently swell our sails,
And from our eyes with softened anguish flow
The tears of separation. Fare thee well!
And graciously extend to me thy hand,
In pledge of ancient friendship.

THOAS (*extending his hand*).

Fare thee well!

Torquato Tasso

A Drama in Five Acts

Translated by Anna Swanwick

This drama was written first in prose : during Goethe's residence at Rome in 1786–88 he began to versify it, and completed it on his journey home.

Introduction

THE annals of biography offer no page the perusal of which awakens a greater variety of emotions than that which records the fate of Torquato Tasso. This great poet, distinguished alike by his genius and his misfortunes, concentrates in his own person the deepest interests of humanity; while the mystery which broods over his derangement and his love imparts to his story the air rather of poetic fiction than of sober truth. Goethe's poem, founded upon the residence of Tasso at the court of Ferrara, is justly celebrated for its fine delineations of character and its profound insight into the depths of the human heart. It exhibits a striking picture of the great bard at the most momentous period of his existence, which was signalised by the completion of his immortal work; and though the action of the drama embraces only a few hours, by skilfully availing himself of retrospect and anticipation, Goethe has presented us with a beautiful epitome of the poet's life.

Thus, in the third scene of the drama, Tasso alludes to his early childhood, the sorrows of which he has so pathetically sung: we accompany the youthful bard, in his twenty-second year, to the brilliant court of Ferrara, where he arrived at a period when the nuptials of the duke with the emperor's sister were celebrated with unrivalled splendour. At the conclusion of these festivities, he was presented by the Princess Lucretia to her sister, Leonora, who was destined to exert such a powerful influence over his future life: we behold him the honoured and cherished inmate of Belriguardo,

a magnificent palace, surrounded by beautiful gardens, where the Dukes of Ferrara were accustomed to retire with their most favoured courtiers, and where, under the inspiring influences of love, beauty, and court favour, he completed his "Gerusalemme Liberata," one of the proudest monuments of human genius.

Goethe has with great skill made us acquainted with some of the circumstances, which, acting upon the peculiar temperament of the poet, at length induced the mental disorder which cast so dark a shadow over his later years. His hopeless love for Leonora no doubt conspired with other causes to unsettle his fine intellect, — a calamity which in him appears like the bewilderment of a mind suddenly awakened from the visions of poetry and love passionately cherished for so many years, into the cold realities of actual life, where his too sensitive ear was stunned by the harsh and discordant voices of envy and superstition. We are thus prepared for his distracted flight from Ferrara; and Goethe has introduced prospectively the touching incident related by Manso, — how, in the disguise of a shepherd, he presented himself to his sister Cornelia, to whom he related his story in language so pathetic, that she fainted from the violence of her grief.

His return to Ferrara, his imprisonment in the Hospital of Santa Anna, and his subsequent miserable wanderings from city to city, are not mentioned in the drama; but the allusion of Alphonso to the crown which should adorn him on the Capitol, brings to our remembrance the affecting circumstances of his death.

It appears from his letters, that, at one period of his life, he earnestly desired a triumph similar to that which Petrarca had enjoyed; but when at length this honour was accorded him, when a period was assigned for this splendid pageant, a change had come over his spirit. His long sufferings had weaned his thoughts from earth: he felt that the hand of death was upon

him, and hoped — to use his own words — "to go crowned, not as a poet to the Capitol, but with glory as a saint to heaven." On the eve of the day appointed for the ceremony, he expired at the monastery of St. Onofrio; and his remains, habited in a magnificent toga, and adorned with a laurel crown, were carried in procession through the streets of Rome.

Goethe has faithfully portrayed the times in which Tasso lived; and circumstances apparently trivial have an historical significance, and impart an air of reality to the drama. Thus the fanciful occupation and picturesque attire of the princess and countess at the opening of the piece transport us at once to that graceful court where the pastoral drama was invented and refined, and where, not long before, Tasso's "Aminta," which is considered one of the most beautiful specimens of this species of composition, had been performed for the first time with enthusiastic applause.

The crown adorning the bust of Ariosto, together with the enthusiastic admiration expressed for that poet by Antonio, is likewise characteristic of the age. The "Orlando Furioso" had been composed at the same court about fifty years before, and had become so universally popular, that, according to Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, "neither learned man nor artisan, no youth, no maid, no old man could be satisfied with a single perusal: passengers in the streets, sailors in their boats, and virgins in their chambers sang for their disport the stanzas of Ariosto." [1]

The project of dethroning this monarch of Parnassus, or, at least, of placing upon his own brow a crown as glorious, appears from his own letters early to have awakened the ambition of Tasso.

The subordinate characters of the drama are also historical portraits. Alphonso II. is represented by his biographers as the liberal patron of the arts, and as

[1] Black's "Life of Tasso."

treating Tasso at this period with marked consideration; nor had he yet manifested that implacable and revengeful spirit which has rendered his memory justly hateful to posterity. In the relation which subsisted between this prince and Tasso, Goethe has exhibited the evils resulting from the false spirit of patronage prevalent at that period throughout Italy, when talent was regarded as the necessary appendage of rank, and works of genius were considered as belonging rather to the patron than to the individual by whom they had been produced.

Antonio Montecatino, the duke's secretary, is also drawn from life. He is an admirable personification of that spirit of worldly wisdom which looks principally to material results and contemplates promotion and court favour as the highest object of ambition. This "earth-born prudence," having little sympathy with poetic genius, affects to treat it with contempt, resents as presumptuous its violation of ordinary rules, holds up its foibles and eccentricities to ridicule, and at the same time envies the homage paid to it by mankind.

At the period of the drama, the court of Ferrara was graced by the presence of Leonora, Countess of Scandiano, in whom Goethe has portrayed a woman eminently graceful and accomplished, but who fails to win our sympathy because her ruling sentiment is vanity. Tasso paid to this young beauty the tribute of public homage, and addressed to her some of his most beautiful sonnets: according to Ginguéné, however, his sentiment for her was merely poetical, and could easily ally itself with the more genuine, deep, and constant affection which he entertained for Leonora of Este.

Lucretia and Leonora of Este were the daughters of Renée of France, celebrated for her insatiable thirst for knowledge, and for the variety and depth of her studies. She became zealously attached to the tenets of the Re-

formers, in consequence of which she was deprived of her children and closely imprisoned for twelve years.

To the intellectual power, the knowledge, heresy, and consequent misfortunes of her unhappy mother, the Princess Leonora twice alludes in the course of the drama. The daughters of this heroic woman inherited her mental superiority; and Leonora, the younger, is celebrated by various writers for her genius, learning, beauty, and early indifference to the pleasures of the world.

Dramatis Personæ

Alphonso II., *Duke of Ferrara.*
Leonora D'Este, *Sister to the Duke.*
Leonora Sanvitale, *Countess of Scandiano.*
Torquato Tasso.
Antonio Montecatino, *Secretary of State.*

Torquato Tasso

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Garden adorned with busts of the Epic Poets. To the right a bust of Virgil; to the left, one of Ariosto.* PRINCESS *and* LEONORA, *habited as shepherdesses.*

PRINCESS.

SMILING thou dost survey me, Leonora;
And with a smile thou dost survey thyself.
What is it? Let a friend partake thy thought!
Thou seemest pensive, yet thou seemest pleased.

LEONORA.

Yes, I am pleased, my princess, to behold
Us twain in rural fashion thus attired.
Two happy shepherd-maidens we appear,
And like the happy we are both employed.
Garlands we wreathe: this one, so gay with flowers,
Beneath my hand in varied beauty grows;
Thou hast with higher taste and larger heart
The slender pliant laurel made thy choice.

PRINCESS.

The laurel wreath, which aimlessly I twined,
Hath found at once a not unworthy head:
I place it gratefully on Virgil's brow.
(*She crowns the bust of Virgil.*)

LEONORA.

With my full joyous wreath the lofty brow
Of Master Ludovico thus I crown —
(*She crowns the bust of Ariosto.*)
Let him whose sportive sallies never fade
Receive his tribute from the early spring.

PRINCESS.

My brother is most kind, to bring us here
In this sweet season to our rural haunts:
Here, by the hour, in freedom unrestrained,
We may dream back the poet's golden age.
I love this Belriguardo: in my youth
Full many a joyous day I lingered here;
And this bright sunshine, and this verdant green,
Bring back the feelings of that bygone time.

LEONORA.

Yes: a new world surrounds us! Grateful now
The cooling shelter of these evergreens.
The tuneful murmur of this gurgling spring
Once more revives us. In the morning wind
The tender branches waver to and fro.
The flowers look upwards from their lowly beds,
And smile upon us with their childlike eyes.
The gardener, fearless grown, removes the roof
That screened his citron and his orange trees;
The azure dome of heaven above us rests;

And, in the far horizon, from the hills
The snow in balmy vapour melts away.

PRINCESS.

Most welcome were to me the genial spring,
Did it not lead my friend away from me.

LEONORA.

My princess, in these sweet and tranquil hours,
Remind me not how soon I must depart.

PRINCESS.

Yon mighty city will restore to thee,
In double measure, what thou leavest here.

LEONORA.

The voice of duty and the voice of love
Both call me to my lord, forsaken long.
I bring to him his son, who rapidly
Hath grown in stature, and matured in mind,
Since last they met: I share his father's joy.
Florence is great and noble, but the worth
Of all her treasured riches doth not reach
The prouder jewels that Ferrara boasts.
That city to her people owes her power:
Ferrara grew to greatness through her princes.

PRINCESS.

More through the noble men whom chance led here,
And who in sweet communion here remained.

LEONORA.

Chance doth again disperse what chance collects:
A noble nature can alone attract

The noble, and retain them, as ye do.
Around thy brother, and around thyself,
Assemble spirits worthy of you both;
And ye are worthy of your noble sires.
Here the fair light of science and free thought
Was kindled first, while o'er the darkened world
Still hung barbarian gloom. E'en when a child
The names resounded loudly in mine ear,
Of Hercules and Hippolyte of Este.
My father oft with Florence and with Rome
Extolled Ferrara! Oft in youthful dream
Hither I fondly turned: now am I here.
Here was Petrarca kindly entertained,
And Ariosto found his models here.
Italia boasts no great, no mighty name,
This princely mansion hath not called its guest.
In fostering genius we enrich ourselves:
Dost thou present her with a friendly gift,
One far more beautiful she leaves with thee.
The ground is hallowed where the good man treads:
When centuries have rolled, his sons shall hear
The deathless echo of his words and deeds.

PRINCESS.

Yes, if those sons have feelings quick as thine:
This happiness full oft I envy thee.

LEONORA.

Which purely and serenely thou, my friend,
As few beside thee, dost thyself enjoy.
When my full heart impels me to express
Promptly and freely what I keenly feel,
Thou feelest the while more deeply, and — art silent.
Delusive splendour doth not dazzle thee,
Nor wit beguile; and flattery strives in vain

With fawning artifice to win thine ear:
Firm is thy temper, and correct thy taste,
Thy judgment just; and, truly great thyself,
With greatness thou dost ever sympathise.

PRINCESS.

Thou shouldst not to this highest flattery
The garment of confiding friendship lend.

LEONORA.

Friendship is just: she only estimates
The full extent and measure of thy worth.
Let me ascribe to opportunity,
To fortune too, her portion in thy culture,
Still in the end thou hast it, it is thine;
And all extol thy sister and thyself
Before the noblest women of the age.

PRINCESS.

That can but little move me, Leonora,
When I reflect how poor at best we are,
To others more indebted than ourselves.
My knowledge of the ancient languages,
And of the treasures by the past bequeathed,
I owe my mother, who, in varied lore
And mental power, her daughters far excelled.
Might either claim comparison with her,
'Tis undeniably Lucretia's right.
Besides, what nature and what chance bestowed
As property or rank I ne'er esteemed.
'Tis pleasure to me when the wise converse,
That I their scope and meaning comprehend,
Whether they judge a man of bygone times
And weigh his actions, or of science treat,
Which, when extended and applied to life,

At once exalts and benefits mankind.
Where'er the converse of such men may lead,
I follow gladly, for with ease I follow.
Well pleased the strife of argument I hear,
When, round the powers that sway the human breast,
Waking alternately delight and fear,
With grace the lip of eloquence doth play;
And listen gladly when the princely thirst
Of fame, of wide dominion, forms the theme,
When of an able man, the thought profound,
Developed skilfully with subtle tact,
Doth not perplex and dazzle, but instruct.

LEONORA.

And then, this grave and serious converse o'er,
Our ear and inner mind with tranquil joy
Upon the poet's tuneful verse repose,
Who, through the medium of harmonious sounds,
Infuses sweet emotions in the soul.
Thy lofty spirit grasps a wide domain:
Content am I to linger in the isle
Of poesy, her laurel groves among.

PRINCESS.

In this fair land, I'm told, the myrtle blooms
In richer beauty than all other trees:
Here, too, the Muses wander; yet we seek
A friend and playmate 'mong their tuneful choir
Less often than we seek to meet the bard,
Who seems to shun us, — nay, appears to flee
In quest of something that we know not of,
And which, perchance, is to himself unknown.
How charming were it, if, in happy hour
Encountering us, he should with ecstasy
In our fair selves the treasure recognise,
Which in the world he long had sought in vain!

LEONORA.

To your light raillery I must submit:
So light its touch it passeth harmless by.
I honour all men after their desert,
And am in truth toward Tasso only just.
His eye scarce lingers on this earthly scene
To nature's harmony his ear is tuned.
What history offers, and what life presents,
His bosom promptly and with joy receives:
The widely scattered is by him combined,
And his quick feeling animates the dead.
Oft he ennobles what we count for nought:
What others treasure is by him despised.
Thus moving in his own enchanted sphere,
The wondrous man doth still allure us on
To wander with him and partake his joy:
Though seeming to approach us, he remains
Remote as ever; and perchance his eye,
Resting on us, sees spirits in our place.

PRINCESS.

Thou hast with taste and truth portrayed the bard,
Who hovers in the shadowy realm of dreams.
And yet reality, it seems to me,
Hath also power to lure him and enchain.
In the sweet sonnets, scattered here and there,
With which we sometimes find our trees adorned,
Creating like the golden fruit of old
A new Hesperia, perceivest thou not
The gentle tokens of a genuine love?

LEONORA.

In these fair leaves I also take delight.
With all his rich diversity of thought
He glorifies one form in all his strains.
Now he exalts her to the starry heavens

In radiant glory, and before that form
Bows down, like angels in the realms above.
Then, stealing after her through silent fields,
He garlands in his wreath each beauteous flower;
And, should the form he worships disappear,
Hallows the path her gentle foot hath trod.
Thus like the nightingale, concealed in shade,
From his love-laden breast he fills the air
And neighbouring thickets with melodious plaints:
His blissful sadness and his tuneful grief
Charm every ear, enrapture every heart —

PRINCESS.

And Leonora is the favoured name
Selected for the object of his strains.

LEONORA.

Thy name it is, my princess, as 'tis mine.
It would displease me were it otherwise.
Now I rejoice that under this disguise
He can conceal his sentiment for thee,
And am no less contented with the thought
That this sweet name should also picture me.
Here is no question of an ardent love,
Seeking possession, and with jealous care
Screening its object from another's gaze.
While he enraptured contemplates thy worth,
He in my lighter nature may rejoice.
He loves not us, — forgive me what I say, —
His loved ideal from the spheres he brings,
And doth invest it with the name we bear:
His feeling we participate; we seem
To love the man, yet only love in him
The highest object that can claim our love.

PRINCESS.

In this deep science thou art deeply versed,
My Leonora; and thy words in truth
Play on my ear, yet scarcely reach my soul.

LEONORA.

Thou Plato's pupil! and not comprehend
What a mere novice dares to prattle to thee?
It must be, then, that I have widely erred;
Yet well I know I do not wholly err.
For love doth in this graceful school appear
No longer as the spoilt and wayward child:
He is the youth whom Psyche hath espoused,
Who sits in council with the assembled gods.
He hath relinquished passion's fickle sway:
He clings no longer with delusion sweet
To outward form and beauty, to atone
For brief excitement by disgust and hate.

PRINCESS.

Here comes my brother! let us not betray
Whither our converse hath conducted us;
Else we shall have his raillery to bear,
As in our dress he found a theme for jest.

Scene II. — Princess, Leonora, Alphonso.

ALPHONSO.

Tasso I seek, whom nowhere I can find;
And even here, with you, I meet him not.
Can you inform me where he hides himself?

PRINCESS.

I have scarce seen him for the last two days.

ALPHONSO.

'Tis his habitual failing that he seeks
Seclusion rather than society.
I can forgive him when the motley crowd
Thus studiously he shuns, and loves to hold
Free converse with himself in solitude;
Yet can I not approve, that he should thus
Also the circle of his friends avoid.

LEONORA.

If I mistake not, thou wilt soon, O prince!
Convert this censure into joyful praise.
To-day I saw him from afar: he held
A book and scroll, in which at times he wrote,
And then resumed his walk, then wrote again.
A passing word, which yesterday he spoke,
Seemed to announce to me his work complete:
His sole anxiety is now to add
A finished beauty to minuter parts,
That to your Grace, to whom he owes so much,
A worthy offering he at length may bring.

ALPHONSO.

A welcome, when he brings it, shall be his,
And long immunity from all restraint.
Great, in proportion to the lively joy
And interest which his noble work inspires,
Is my impatience at its long delay.
After each slow advance he leaves his task:
He ever changeth, and can ne'er conclude,
Till baffled hope is weary; for we see
Reluctantly postponed to times remote
A pleasure we had fondly deemed so near.

PRINCESS.

I rather praise the modesty, the care,
With which thus, step by step, he nears the goal.
His aim is not to string amusing tales,
Or weave harmonious numbers, which at length,
Like words delusive, die upon the ear.
His numerous rhymes he labours to combine
Into one beautiful, poetic whole;
And he whose soul this lofty aim inspires,
Must pay devoted homage to the Muse.
Disturb him not, my brother: time alone
Is not the measure of a noble work;
And, is the coming age to share our joy,
We of the present must forget ourselves.

ALPHONSO.

Let us, dear sister, work together here,
As for our mutual good we oft have done.
Am I too eager — thou must then restrain;
Art thou too gentle — I will urge him on.
Then we perchance shall see him at the goal,
Where to behold him we have wished in vain.
His fatherland, the world, shall then admire
And view with wonder his completed work.
I shall receive my portion of the fame,
And Tasso will be ushered into life.
In a contracted sphere, a noble man
Cannot develop all his mental powers.
On him his country and the world must work.
He must endure both censure and applause,
Must be compelled to estimate aright
Himself and others. Solitude no more
Lulls him delusively with flattering dreams.
Opponents will not, friendship dare not, spare:
Then in the strife the youth puts forth his powers,
Knows what he is, and feels himself a man.

LEONORA.

Thus will he, prince, owe everything to thee,
Who hast already done so much for him.
Talents are nurtured best in solitude, —
A character on life's tempestuous sea.
Oh that according to thy rules he would
Model his temper as he forms his taste,
Cease to avoid mankind, nor in his breast
Nurture suspicion into fear and hate!

ALPHONSO.

He only fears mankind who knows them not,
And he will soon misjudge them who avoids.
This is his case, and so by slow degrees
His noble mind is trammelled and perplexed.
Thus to secure my favour he betrays,
At times, unseemly ardour; against some,
Who, I am well assured, are not his foes,
He cherishes suspicion; if by chance
A letter go astray, a hireling leave
His service, or a paper be mislaid,
He sees deception, treachery, and fraud,
Working insidiously to sap his peace.

PRINCESS.

Let us, beloved brother, not forget
That his own nature none can lay aside.
And should a friend, who with us journeyeth,
Injure by chance his foot, we would in sooth
Rather relax our speed, and lend our hand
Gently to aid the sufferer on his way.

ALPHONSO.

Better it were to remedy his pain,
With the physician's aid attempt a cure,

Then with our healed and renovated friend
A new career of life with joy pursue.
And yet, dear friends, I hope that I may ne'er
The censure of the cruel leech incur.
I do my utmost to impress his mind
With feelings of security and trust.
Oft purposely, in presence of the crowd,
With marks of favour I distinguish him.
Should he complain of aught, I sift it well,
As lately when his chamber he supposed
Had been invaded; then, should nought appear,
I calmly show him how I view the affair.
And, as we ought to practise every grace
With Tasso, seeing he deserves it well,
I practise patience: you, I'm sure, will aid.
I now have brought you to your rural haunts,
And must myself at eve return to town.
For a few moments you will see Antonio:
He calls here for me on his way from Rome.
We have important business to discuss,
Resolves to frame, and letters to indite,
All which compels me to return to town.

PRINCESS.

Wilt thou permit that we return with thee?

ALPHONSO.

Nay: rather linger here in Belriguardo,
Or go together to Consandoli;
Enjoy these lovely days as fancy prompts.

PRINCESS.

Thou canst not stay with us? Not here arrange
All these affairs as well as in the town?

LEONORA.

So soon, thou takest hence Antonio, too,
Who hath so much to tell us touching Rome.

ALPHONSO.

It may not be, ye children: but with him
So soon as possible will I return;
Then shall he tell you all ye wish to hear,
And ye shall help me to reward the man,
Who, in my cause, hath laboured with such zeal.
And, when we shall once more have talked our fill,
Hither the crowd may come, that mirth and joy
May in our gardens revel, that for me,
As is but meet, some fair one in the shade
May, if I seek her, gladly meet me there.

LEONORA.

And we meanwhile will kindly shut our eyes.

ALPHONSO.

Ye know that I can be forbearing too.

PRINCESS (*turned toward the scene*).

I long have noticed Tasso; hitherward
Slowly he bends his footsteps; suddenly,
As if irresolute, he standeth still;
Anon, with greater speed he draweth near,
Then lingers once again.

ALPHONSO.

Disturb him not,
Nor, when the poet dreams and versifies,
Intrude upon his musings: let him roam.

LEONORA.

No: he has seen us, and he comes this way.

SCENE III. — PRINCESS, LEONORA, ALPHONSO, TASSO (*with a volume bound in parchment*).

TASSO.

Slowly I come to bring my work to thee,
And yet I linger ere presenting it.
Although apparently it seems complete,
Too well I know, it is unfinished still.
But, if I cherished once an anxious fear
Lest I should bring thee an imperfect work,
A new solicitude constrains me now:
I would not seem ungrateful, nor appear
Unduly anxious; and as to his friends,
A man can say but simply, "Here I am!"
That they, with kind forbearance, may rejoice,
So I can only say, "Receive my work!"
(*He presents the volume.*)

ALPHONSO.

Thou hast surprised me, Tasso, with thy gift,
And made this lovely day a festival.
I hold it, then, at length within my hands,
And in a certain sense can call it mine.
Long have I wished that thou couldst thus resolve,
And say at length, "'Tis finished! here it is."

TASSO.

Are you contented? then it is complete,
For it belongs to you in every sense.
Were I to contemplate the pains bestowed,
Or dwell upon the written character,

I might, perchance, exclaim, "This work is mine!"
But when I mark what 'tis that to my song
Its inner worth and dignity imparts,
I humbly feel I owe it all to you.
If Nature from her liberal stores on me
The genial gift of poesy bestowed,
Capricious Fortune, with malignant power,
Had thrust me from her; though this beauteous world
With all its varied splendour lured the boy,
Too early was his youthful eye bedimmed
By his loved parents' undeserved distress.
Forth from my lips, when I essayed to sing,
There ever flowed a melancholy song;
And I accompanied, with plaintive tones,
My father's sorrow and my mother's grief.
'Twas thou alone, who, from this narrow sphere,
Raised me to glorious liberty, relieved
From each depressing care my youthful mind,
And gave me freedom, in whose genial air
My spirit could unfold in harmony:
Then, whatsoe'er the merit of the work,
Thine be the praise, for it belongs to thee.

ALPHONSO.

A second time thou dost deserve applause,
And honourest modestly thyself and us.

TASSO.

Fain would I say how sensibly I feel
That what I bring is all derived from thee!
The inexperienced youth — could he produce
The poem from his own unfurnished mind?
Could he invent the conduct of the war,
The gallant bearing and the martial skill
Which every hero on the field displayed,

"This single moment is enough for me"

Photogravure from the painting by F. Barth

The leader's prudence, and his followers' zeal,
How vigilance the arts of cunning foiled,
Hadst thou not, valiant prince, infused it all,
As if my guardian genius thou hadst been,
Through a mere mortal deigning to reveal
His nature high and inaccessible?

PRINCESS.

Enjoy the work in which we all rejoice!

ALPHONSO.

Enjoy the approbation of the good!

LEONORA.

Rejoice, too, in thy universal fame!

TASSO.

This single moment is enough for me.
Of you alone I thought while I composed:
You to delight was still my highest wish,
You to enrapture was my final aim.
Who doth not in his friends behold the world,
Deserves not that of him the world should hear.
Here is my fatherland, and here the sphere
In which my spirit fondly loves to dwell;
Here I attend and value every hint;
Here speak experience, knowledge, and true taste;
Here stand the present and the future age.
With shy reserve the artist shuns the crowd:
Its judgment but perplexes. Those alone
With minds like yours can understand and feel,
And such alone should censure and reward!

ALPHONSO.

If thus the present and the future age
We represent, it is not meet that we

Receive the poet's song unrecompensed.
The laurel wreath, fit chaplet for the bard,
Which e'en the hero, who requires his verse,
Sees without envy round his temples twined,
Adorns, thou seest, thy predecessor's brow.
(*Pointing to the bust of Virgil.*)
Hath chance, hath some kind genius, twined the wreath,
And brought it hither? Not in vain it thus
Presents itself: Virgil I hear exclaim,
"Wherefore confer this honour on the dead?
They in their lifetime had reward and joy:
Do ye indeed revere the bards of old?
Then, to the living bard accord his due.
My marble statue hath been amply crowned,
And the green laurel branch belongs to life."
(*Alphonso makes a sign to his sister; she takes the crown from the bust of Virgil, and approaches* TASSO; *he steps back.*)

LEONORA.

Thou dost refuse? Seest thou what hand the wreath,
The fair, the never-fading wreath, presents?

TASSO.

Oh, let me pause! I scarce can comprehend
How after such an hour I still can live.

ALPHONSO.

Live in enjoyment of the high reward
From which thy inexperience shrinks with fear.

PRINCESS (*raising the crown*).

Thou dost afford me, Tasso, the rare joy
Of giving silent utterance to my thought.

TASSO.

The beauteous burden from thy honoured hands,
On my weak head, thus kneeling I receive.
(*He kneels down: the* PRINCESS *places the crown upon his head.*)

LEONORA (*applauding*).

Long live the poet, for the first time crowned!
How well the crown adorns the modest man!
(TASSO *rises.*)

ALPHONSO.

It is an emblem only of that crown
Which shall adorn thee on the Capitol.

PRINCESS.

There louder voices will salute thine ear:
Friendship with lower tones rewards thee here.

TASSO.

Take it, oh, take it quickly, from my brow!
Pray thee remove it! It doth scorch my locks:
And like a sunbeam, that with fervid heat
Falls on my forehead, burneth in my brain
The power of thought; while fever's fiery glow
Impels my blood. Forgive! it is too much.

LEONORA.

This garland rather doth protect the head
Of him who treads the burning realm of fame,
And with its grateful shelter cools his brow.

TASSO.

I am not worthy to receive its shade,
Which only round the hero's brow should wave.
Ye gods, exalt it high among the clouds,
To float in glory inaccessible,
That through eternity my life may be
An endless striving to attain this goal!

ALPHONSO.

He who in youth acquires life's noblest gifts,
Learns early to esteem their priceless worth;
He who in youth enjoys, resigneth not
Without reluctance what he once possessed;
And he who would possess, must still be armed.

TASSO.

And who would arm himself, within his breast
A power must feel that ne'er forsaketh him.
Ah, it forsakes me now! In happiness
The inborn power subsides, which tutored me
To meet injustice with becoming pride,
And steadfastly to face adversity.
Hath the delight, the rapture, of this hour,
Dissolved the strength and marrow in my limbs?
My knees sink feebly! yet a second time
Thou seest me, princess, here before thee bowed:
Grant my petition, and remove the crown,
That, as awakened from a blissful dream,
A new and fresh existence I may feel.

PRINCESS.

If thou with quiet modesty canst wear
The glorious talent from the gods received,

Learn also now the laurel wreath to wear,
The fairest gift that friendship can bestow.
The brow it once hath worthily adorned,
It shall encircle through eternity.

TASSO.

Oh, let me, then, ashamed from hence retire!
Let me in deepest shades my joy conceal,
As there my sorrow I was wont to shroud.
There will I range alone: no eye will there
Remind me of a bliss so undeserved.
And if perchance I should behold a youth
In the clear mirror of a crystal spring,
Who in the imaged heaven, 'midst rocks and trees,
Absorbed in thought appears, his brow adorned
With glory's garland, — there, methinks, I see
Elysium mirrored in the magic flood.
I pause and calmly ask, Who may this be?
What youth of bygone times so fairly crowned?
Whence can I learn his name? his high desert?
I linger long, and musing fondly think:
Oh, might there come another, and yet more,
To join with him in friendly intercourse!
Oh, could I see assembled round this spring
The bards, the heroes, of the olden time!
Could I behold them still united here
As they in life were ever firmly bound!
As with mysterious power the magnet binds
Iron with iron, so do kindred aims
Unite the souls of heroes and of bards.
Himself forgetting, Homer spent his life
In contemplation of two mighty men;
And Alexander in the Elysium fields
Doth Homer and Achilles haste to seek.
Oh, would that I were present to behold
Those mighty spirits in communion met.

LEONORA.

Awake! awake! let us not feel that thou
The present quite forgettest in the past.

TASSO.

It is the present that inspireth me:
Absent I seem alone, I am entranced!

PRINCESS.

When thou dost speak with spirits, I rejoice
The voice is human, and I gladly hear.
(*A page steps to the* PRINCE.)

ALPHONSO.

He is arrived! and in a happy hour:
Antonio! Bring him hither, — here he comes!

SCENE IV. — PRINCESS, LEONORA, ALPHONSO, TASSO, ANTONIO.

ALPHONSO.

Thou'rt doubly welcome! thou who bringest at once
Thyself and welcome tidings.

PRINCESS.

Welcome here!

ANTONIO.

Scarce dare I venture to express the joy
Which in your presence quickens me anew.
In your society I find restored
What I have missed so long. You seem content
With what I have accomplished, what achieved;

So am I recompensed for every care,
For many days impatiently endured,
And many others wasted purposely.
At length our wish is gained, — the strife is o'er.

LEONORA.

I also greet thee, though in sooth displeased:
Thou dost arrive when I must hence depart.

ANTONIO.

As if to mar my perfect happiness,
One lovely part forthwith thou takest hence.

TASSO.

My greetings too! I also shall rejoice
In converse with the much-experienced man.

ANTONIO.

Thou'lt find me true, whenever thou wilt deign
To glance awhile from thy world into mine.

ALPHONSO.

Though thou by letter hast announced to me
The progress and the issue of our cause,
Full many questions I have yet to ask
Touching the course thou hast pursued therein.
In that strange region a well-measured step
Alone conducts us to our destined goal.
Who doth his sovereign's interest purely seek,
In Rome a hard position must maintain;
For Rome gives nothing, while she grasps at all:
Let him who thither goes some boon to claim,
Go well provided, and esteem himself
Most happy, if e'en then he gaineth aught.

ANTONIO.

'Tis neither my demeanour nor my art
By which thy will hath been accomplished, prince.
For where the skill which at the Vatican
Would not be overmastered? Much conspired
Which I could use in furtherance of our cause.
Pope Gregory salutes and blesses thee.
That aged man, that sovereign most august,
Who on his brow the load of empire bears,
Recalls the time when he embraced thee last
With pleasure. He who can distinguish men
Knows and extols thee highly. For thy sake
He hath done much.

ALPHONSO.

So far as 'tis sincere,
His good opinion cannot but rejoice me.
But well thou knowest, from the Vatican
The Pope sees empires dwindled at his feet;
Princes and men must needs seem small indeed.
Confess what was it most assisted thee.

ANTONIO.

Good! if thou will'st: the Pope's exalted mind.
To him the small seems small, the great seems great.
That he may wield the empire of the world,
He to his neighbour yields with kind good will.
The strip of land, which he resigns to thee,
He knoweth, like thy friendship, well to prize.
Italia must be tranquil, friends alone
Will he behold around him, peace must reign
Upon his borders, that of Christendom
The might, which he so potently directs,
May smite at once the Heretic and Turk.

PRINCESS.

And is it known what men he most esteems,
And who approach him confidentially ?

ANTONIO.

The experienced man alone can win his ear,
The active man his favour and esteem.
He, who from early youth has served the state,
Commands it now, ruling those very courts
Which, in his office of ambassador,
He had observed and guided years before.
The world lies spread before his searching gaze,
Clear as the interests of his own domain.
In action we must yield him our applause.
And mark with joy, when time unfolds the plans
Which his deep forethought fashioned long before.
There is no fairer prospect in the world
Than to behold a prince who wisely rules;
A realm where every one obeys with pride,
Where each imagines that he serves himself,
Because 'tis justice only that commands.

LEONORA.

How ardently I long to view that realm !

ALPHONSO.

Doubtless that thou mayst play thy part therein,
For Leonora never could remain
A mere spectator: meet it were, fair friend,
If now and then we let your gentle hands
Join in the mighty game — say, is't not so ?

LEONORA (*to* ALPHONSO).

Thou wouldst provoke me, — thou shalt not succeed.

ALPHONSO.

I am already deeply in thy debt.

LEONORA.

Good: then to-day I will remain in thine!
Forgive, and do not interrupt me now.

(*To* ANTONIO.)

Say, hath he for his relatives done much?

ANTONIO.

Nor more nor less than equity allows.
The potentate who doth neglect his friends
Is even by the people justly blamed.
With wise discretion Gregory employs
His friends as trusty servants of the state,
And thus fulfils at once two kindred claims.

TASSO.

Doth science, do the liberal arts, enjoy
His fostering care? and doth he emulate
The glorious princes of the olden time?

ANTONIO.

He honours science when it is of use, –
Teaching to govern states, to know mankind:
He prizes art when it embellishes, —
When it exalts and beautifies his Rome,
Erecting palaces and temples there,
Which rank among the marvels of this earth.
Within his sphere of influence he admits
Nought inefficient, and alone esteems
The active cause and instrument of good.

ALPHONSO.

Thou thinkest, then, that we may soon conclude
The whole affair? that no impediments
Will finally be scattered in our way?

ANTONIO.

Unless I greatly err, 'twill but require
A few brief letters and thy signature,
To bring this contest to a final close.

ALPHONSO.

This day with justice, then, I may proclaim
A season of prosperity and joy.
My frontiers are enlarged and made secure:
Thou hast accomplished all without the sword,
And hence deservest well a civic crown.
Our ladies on some beauteous morn shall twine
A wreath of oak to bind around thy brow.
Meanwhile our poet hath enriched us too:
He, by his conquest of Jerusalem,
Hath put our modern Christendom to shame.
With joyous spirit and unwearied zeal,
A high and distant goal he had attained;
For his achievement thou beholdest him crowned.

ANTONIO.

Thou solvest an enigma. Two crowned heads
I saw with wonder on arriving here.

TASSO.

While thou dost gaze upon my happiness,
With the same glance, oh, couldst thou view my heart,
And witness there my deep humility!

ANTONIO.

How lavishly Alphonso can reward
I long have known: thou only provest now
What all enjoy who come within its sphere.

PRINCESS.

When thou shalt see the work he hath achieved,
Thou wilt esteem us moderate and just.
The first, the silent, witnesses are we
Of praises which the world and future years
In tenfold measure will accord to him.

ANTONIO.

Through you his fame is certain. Who so bold
To entertain a doubt when you commend?
But tell me, who on Ariosto's brow
Hath placed this wreath?

LEONORA.

This hand.

ANTONIO.

It hath done well.
It more becomes him than a laurel crown.
As o'er her fruitful bosom Nature throws
Her variegated robe of beauteous green,
So he enshrouds in Fable's flowery garb
Whatever can conspire to render man
Worthy of love and honour. Power and taste,
Experience, understanding, and content,
And a pure feeling for the good and true,
Pervade the spirit of his every song,
And there appear in person, to repose
'Neath blossoming trees, besprinkled by the snow
Of lightly falling flowers, their heads entwined

With rosy garlands; while the sportive Loves
With frolic humour weave their magic spells.
A copious fountain, gurgling near, displays
Strange variegated fish; and all the air
Is vocal with the song of wondrous birds;
Strange cattle pasture in the bowers and glades;
Half hid in verdure, Folly slyly lurks;
At times, resounding from a golden cloud,
The voice of Wisdom utters lofty truth;
While Madness, from a wild, harmonious lute,
Scatters forth bursts of fitful harmony,
Yet all the while the justest measure holds.
He who aspires to emulate this man,
E'en for his boldness well deserves a crown.
Forgive me if I feel myself inspired,
Like one entranced forget both time and place,
And fail to weigh my words; for all these crowns,
These poets, and the festival attire
Of these fair ladies, have transported me
Out of myself into a foreign land.

PRINCESS.

Who thus can prize one species of desert,
Will not misjudge another. Thou to us,
Some future day, shalt show in Tasso's song
What we can feel, and thou canst comprehend.

ALPHONSO.

Come, now, Antonio! many things remain
Whereof I am desirous to inquire.
Then, till the setting of the sun, thou shalt
Attend the ladies. Follow me, — farewell!

(ANTONIO *follows the prince.* TASSO *the ladies.*)

ACT II.

Scene I. — *A Room.* Princess, Tasso.

TASSO.

I with uncertain footsteps follow thee,
O princess: there arise within my soul
Thoughts without rule and measure. Solitude
Appears to beckon me: complaisantly
She whispers, "Hither come, I will allay,
Within thy breast, the newly wakened doubt."
Yet catch I but a glimpse of thee, or takes
My listening ear one utterance from thy lip,
At once a new-born day around me shines,
And all the fetters vanish from my soul.
To thee I freely will confess, the man
Who unexpectedly appeared among us
Hath rudely waked me from a beauteous dream:
So strangely have his nature and his words
Affected me, that more than ever now
A want of inward harmony I feel,
And a distracting conflict with myself.

PRINCESS.

Tis not to be expected that a friend,
Who long hath sojourned in a foreign land,
Should, in the moment of his first return,
The tone of former times at once resume:
He in his inner mind is still unchanged;
And a few days of intercourse will tune
The jarring strings, until they blend once more
In perfect harmony. When he shall know
The greatness of the work thou hast achieved,
Believe me, he will place thee by the bard,
Whom as a giant now he sets before thee.

TASSO.

My princess, Ariosto's praise from him
Has more delighted than offended me.
Consoling 'tis, to know the man renowned,
Whom as our model we have placed before us:
An inward voice then whispers to the heart,
"Canst thou obtain a portion of his worth,
A portion of his fame is also thine."
No: that which hath most deeply moved my heart,
Which even now completely fills my soul,
Was the majestic picture of that world,
Which, with its living, restless, mighty forms,
Around one great and prudent man revolves,
And runs with measured steps the destined course
Prescribed beforehand by the demigod.
I listened eagerly, and heard with joy
The wise discourse of the experienced man;
But, ah! the more I heard, the more I felt
Mine own unworthiness, and feared that I,
Like empty sound, might dissipate in air,
Or vanish like an echo or a dream.

PRINCESS.

And yet erewhile thou didst so truly feel
How bard and hero for each other live,
How bard and hero to each other tend,
And toward each other know no envious thought.
Noble in truth are deeds deserving fame;
But it is also noble to transmit
The lofty grandeur of heroic deeds,
Through worthy song, to our posterity.
Be satisfied to contemplate in peace,
From a small, sheltering state, as from the shore,
The wild and stormy current of the world.

TASSO.

Was it not here, amazed, I first beheld
The high reward on valiant deeds bestowed?
An inexperienced youth I here arrived,
When festival on festival conspired
To render this the centre of renown.
Oh, what a scene Ferrara then displayed!
The wide arena, where in all its pomp
Accomplished valour should its skill display,
Was bounded by a circle, whose high worth
The sun might seek to parallel in vain.
The fairest women sat assembled there,
And men the most distinguished of the age.
Amazed the eye ran o'er the noble throng:
Proudly I cried, "And 'tis our fatherland,
That small, sea-girded land, hath sent them here.
They constitute the noblest court that e'er
On honour, worth, or virtue, judgment passed.
Survey them singly, thou wilt not find one
Of whom his neighbour needs to feel ashamed!" —
And then the lists were opened, chargers pranced,
Esquires pressed forward, helmets brightly gleamed,
The trumpet sounded, shivering lances split,
The din of clanging helm and shield was heard,
And for a moment eddying dust concealed
The victor's honour and the vanquished's shame.
Oh, let me draw a curtain o'er the scene,
The all too brilliant spectacle conceal,
That in this tranquil hour I may not feel
Too painfully mine own unworthiness!

PRINCESS.

If that bright circle and those noble deeds
Aroused thee then to enterprise and toil,
I could the while, young friend, have tutored thee
In the still lesson of calm sufferance.

The brilliant festival thou dost extol,
Which then and since a hundred voices praised
I did not witness. In a lonely spot,
So tranquil, that, unbroken on the ear,
Joy's lightest echo faintly died away,
A prey to pain and melancholy thoughts,
I was compelled to pass the tedious hours.
Before me hovered, on extended wing,
Death's awful form, concealing from my view
The prospect of this ever-changing world.
Slowly it disappeared: and I beheld,
As through a veil, the varied hues of life,
Pleasing but indistinct; while living forms
Began once more to flicker through the gloom.
Still feeble, and supported by my women,
For the first time my silent room I left,
When hither, full of happiness and life,
Thee leading by the hand, Lucretia came.
A stranger then, thou, Tasso, wast the first
To welcome me on my return to life.
Much then I hoped for both of us; and hope
Hath not, methinks, deceived us hitherto.

TASSO.

Stunned by the tumult, dazzled by the glare,
Impetuous passions stirring in my breast,
I by thy sister's side pursued my way
In silence through the stately corridors,
Then in the chamber entered, where ere long
Thou didst appear supported by thy women.
Oh, what a moment! Princess, pardon me!
As in the presence of a deity
The victim of enchantment feels with joy
His frenzied spirit from delusion freed;
So was my soul from every fantasy,
From every passion, every false desire

Restored at once by one calm glance of thine,
And if, before, my inexperienced mind
Had lost itself in infinite desires,
I then, with shame, first turned my gaze within,
And recognised the truly valuable.
Thus on the wide seashore we seek in vain
The pearl, reposing in its silent shell.

PRINCESS.

'Twas the commencement of a happy time.
And had Urbino's duke not led away
My sister from us, many years had passed
For us in calm, unclouded happiness.
But now, alas! we miss her all too much,
Miss her free spirit, buoyancy, and life,
And the rich wit of the accomplished woman.

TASSO.

Too well I know, since she departed hence,
None hath been able to supply to thee
The pure enjoyment which her presence gave.
Alas, how often hath it grieved my soul!
How often have I, in the silent grove,
Poured forth my lamentation! How! I cried,
Is it her sister's right and joy alone
To be a treasure to the dear one's heart?
Does, then, no other soul respond to hers,
No other heart her confidence deserve?
Are soul and wit extinguished? and should one,
How great soe'er her worth, engross her love?
Forgive me, princess! Often I have wished
I could be something to thee, — little, perhaps,
But something: not with words alone, with deeds
I wished to be so, and in life to prove
How I had worshipped thee in solitude.

But I could ne'er succeed, and but too oft
In error wounded thee, offending one
By thee protected, or perplexing more
What thou didst wish to solve, and thus, alas!
E'en in the moment when I fondly strove
To draw more near thee, felt more distant still.

PRINCESS.

Thy wish I never have misconstrued, Tasso,
How thou dost prejudice thyself I know:
Unlike my sister, who possessed the art
Of living happily with every one,
After so many years, thou art in sooth
Thyself well-nigh unfriended.

TASSO.

Censure me!
But after say, where shall I find the man,
The woman where, to whom as unto thee
I freely can unbosom every thought?

PRINCESS.

Thou shouldest in my brother more confide.

TASSO.

He is my prince! — Yet do not hence suppose
That freedom's lawless impulse swells my breast.
Man is not born for freedom; and to serve
A prince deserving honour and esteem
Is a pure pleasure to a noble mind.
He is my sovereign, — of that great word
I deeply feel the full significance.
I must be silent when he speaks, and learn
To do what he commandeth, though perchance
My heart and understanding both rebel.

PRINCESS.

That with my brother never can befall.
And in Antonio, who is now returned,
Thou wilt possess another prudent friend.

TASSO.

I hoped it once, now almost I despair.
His converse how instructive, and his words
How useful in a thousand instances!
For he possesses, I may truly say,
All that in me is wanting. But, alas!
When round his cradle all the gods assembled
To bring their gifts, the Graces were not there;
And he who lacks what these fair Powers impart,
May much possess, may much communicate·
But on his bosom we can ne'er repose.

PRINCESS.

But we can trust in him, and that is much.
Thou shouldst not, Tasso, in one man expect
All qualities combined: Antonio
What he hath promised surely will perform.
If he have once declared himself thy friend,
He'll care for thee, where thou dost fail thyself.
Ye must be friends! I cherish the fond hope
Ere long this gracious work to consummate.
Only oppose me not, as is thy wont.
Then, Leonora long hath sojourned here,
Who is at once refined and elegant:
Her easy manners banish all restraint,
Yet thou hast ne'er approached her as she wished.

TASSO.

To thee I hearkened, or, believe me, princess,
I should have rather shunned her than approached.

Though she appear so kind, I know not why,
I can but rarely feel at ease with her:
E'en when her purpose is to aid her friends,
They feel the purpose, and are thence constrained.

PRINCESS.

Upon this pathway, Tasso, nevermore
Will glad companionship be ours! This track
Leadeth us on through solitary groves
And silent vales to wander; more and more
The spirit is untuned; and fondly strives
The golden age, that from the outer world
For aye hath vanished, to restore within,
How vain soever the attempt may prove.

TASSO.

Oh, what a word, my princess, hast thou spoken!
The golden age, ah! whither is it flown,
For which in secret every heart repines?
When o'er the yet unsubjugated earth,
Men roamed, like herds, in joyous liberty;
When on the flowery lawn an ancient tree
Lent to the shepherd and the shepherdess
Its grateful shadow, and the leafy grove
Its tender branches lovingly entwined
Around confiding love; when still and clear,
O'er sands for ever pure, the pearly stream
The nymph's fair form encircled; when the snake
Glided innoxious through the verdant grass,
And the bold youth pursued the daring faun;
When every bird winging the limpid air,
And every living thing o'er hill and dale,
Proclaimed to man, — What pleases is allowed.

PRINCESS.

My friend, the golden age hath passed away;
Only the good have power to bring it back:
Shall I confess to thee my secret thought?
The golden age, wherewith the bard is wont
Our spirits to beguile, that lovely prime,
Existed in the past no more than now;
And, did it e'er exist, believe me, Tasso,
As then it was, it now may be restored.
Still meet congenial spirits, and enhance
Each other's pleasures in this beauteous world;
But in the motto change one single word,
And say, my friend, — What's fitting is allowed.

TASSO.

Would that of good and noble men were formed
A great tribunal, to decide for all
What is befitting! then no more would each
Esteem that right which benefits himself.
The man of power acts ever as he lists,
And whatsoe'er he doth is fitting deemed.

PRINCESS.

Wouldst thou define exactly what is fitting,
Thou shouldst apply, methinks, to noble women;
For them it most behooveth that in life
Nought should be done unseemly or unfit:
Propriety encircles with a wall
The tender, weak, and vulnerable sex.
Where moral order reigneth, women reign;
They only are despised where rudeness triumphs,
And wouldst thou touching either sex inquire,
'Tis order woman seeketh; freedom, man.

TASSO.

Thou thinkest us unfeeling, wild, and rude?

PRINCESS.

Not so! but ye with violence pursue
A multitude of objects far remote.
Ye venture for eternity to act;
While we, with views more narrow, on this earth
Seek only one possession, well content
If that with constancy remain our own.
For we, alas! are of no heart secure,
Whate'er the ardour of its first devotion.
Beauty is transient, which alone ye seem
To hold in honour; what beside remains
No longer charms, — what doth not charm is dead.
If among men there were who knew to prize
The heart of woman, who could recognise
What treasure of fidelity and love
Are garnered safely in a woman's breast;
If the remembrance of bright single hours
Could vividly abide within your souls;
If your so searching glance could pierce the veil
Which age and wasting sickness o'er us fling;
If the possession which should satisfy
Wakened no restless cravings in your hearts, —
Then were our happy days indeed arrived,
We then should celebrate our golden age.

TASSO.

Thy words, my princess, in my breast awake
An old anxiety half lulled to sleep.

PRINCESS.

What meanest thou, Tasso? Freely speak with me.

TASSO.

I oft before have heard, and recently
Again it hath been rumoured, — had I not
Been told, I might have known it, — princes strive
To win thy hand. What we must needs expect
We view with dread, — nay, almost with despair.
Thou wilt forsake us, — it is natural;
Yet how we shall endure it, know I not.

PRINCESS.

Be for the present moment unconcerned, —
Almost, I might say, unconcerned for ever.
I am contented still to tarry here,
Nor know I any tie to lure me hence.
And if thou wouldst indeed detain me, Tasso,
Live peaceably with all; so shalt thou lead
A happy life thyself, and I through thee.

TASSO.

Teach me to do whate'er is possible!
My life itself is consecrate to thee.
When to extol thee and to give thee thanks
My heart unfolded, I experienced first
The purest happiness that man can feel;
My soul's ideal I first found in thee.
As destiny supreme is raised above
The will and counsel of the wisest men,
So tower the gods of earth o'er common mortals.
The rolling surge which we behold with dread,
Doth all unheeded murmur at their feet
Like gentle billows: they hear not the storm
Which blusters round us, scarcely heed our prayers,
And treat us as we helpless children treat,
Letting us fill the air with sighs and plaints.
Thou hast, divine one! often borne with me,

And, like the radiant sun, thy pitying glance
Hath from mine eyelid dried the dew of sorrow.

PRINCESS.

'Tis only just that women cordially
Should meet the poet, whose heroic song
In strains so varied glorifies the sex.
Tender or valiant, thou hast ever known
To represent them amiable and noble;
And, if Armida is deserving hate,
Her love and beauty reconcile us to her.

TASSO.

Whatever in my song doth reach the heart
And find an echo there, I owe to one,
And one alone! No image undefined
Hovered before my soul, approaching now
In radiant glory, to retire again.
I have myself, with mine own eyes, beheld
The type of every virtue, every grace;
What I have copied thence will aye endure:
The heroic love of Tancred to Clorinda,
Erminia's silent and unnoticed truth,
Sophronia's greatness and Olinda's woe;
These are not shadows by illusion bred;
I know they are eternal, for they are.
And what is more deserving to survive,
And silently to work for centuries,
Than the confession of a noble love
Confided modestly to gentle song?

PRINCESS.

And shall I name to thee another charm
Which, all unconsciously, this song may claim?

It doth allure us still to listen to it:
We listen, and we think we understand;
We understand, and yet we censure not;
So, with thy song, thou winnest us at last.

TASSO.

Oh, what a heaven thou dost open to me,
My princess! if this radiance blinds me not,
I see unhoped-for and eternal bliss
Descending gloriously on golden beams.

PRINCESS.

No further, Tasso! many things there are
That we may hope to win with violence;
While others only can become our own
Through moderation and wise self-restraint.
Such, it is said, is virtue, such is love,
Which is allied to her. Think well of this!

Scene II.

TASSO.

And art thou, then, allowed to raise thine eyes?
Around thee darest thou gaze? Thou art alone!
O'erheard these pillars what the princess spake?
And hast thou witnesses, dumb witnesses
Of thine exalted happiness to fear?
The sun arises of a new life-day,
Whose splendour dims the light of former days.
The goddess, downward stooping, swiftly bears
Aloft the mortal. What a wide expanse
Is to mine eye discovered, what a realm!
How richly recompensed my burning wish!
In dreams the highest happiness seemed near:
This happiness surpasses all my dreams.

The man born blind conceiveth as he may
Of light and colour: when upon his eye
The daylight pours, he hails a new-born sense.
Full of vague hope and courage, drunk with joy,
Reeling I tread this path. Thou givest me much:
Thou givest lavishly, as earth and heaven,
With bounteous hand, dispense their costly gifts,
Demanding in return what such a boon
Alone empowers thee to demand from me.
I must be moderate, I must forbear,
And thus deserve thy cherished confidence.
What have I ever done that she should choose me?
What can I do to merit her regard?
Her very confidence doth prove thy worth.
Yes, princess, to thine every word and look
Be my whole soul for ever consecrate!
Ask what thou wilt, for I am wholly thine!
To distant regions let her send me forth
In quest of toil and danger and renown;
Or in the grove, present the golden lyre,
Devoting me to quiet and her praise.
Hers am I: me possessing, she shall mould!
For her my heart hath garnered every treasure.
Oh, hath some heavenly power bestowed on me
An organ thousand-fold, I scarcely then
Could utter forth my speechless reverence.
The painter's pencil, and the poet's lip,
The sweetest that e'er sipped the vernal honey,
I covet now. No! Tasso shall henceforth
Wander no more forlorn, 'mong trees, 'mong men,
Lonely and weak, oppressed with gloomy care!
He is no more alone, he is with thee.
Oh, would that visibly the noblest deed
Were present here before me, circled round
With grisly danger! Onward I would rush,
And with a joyous spirit risk the life
Now from her hand received — the choicest men

As comrades I would hail, a noble band,
To execute her will and high behest,
And consummate what seemed impossible.
Rash mortal! wherefore did thy lip not hide
What thou didst feel, till thou couldst lay thyself
Worthy, and ever worthier, at her feet?
Such was thy purpose, such thy prudent wish!
Yet be it so! 'Tis sweeter to receive,
Free and unmerited, so fair a boon,
Than, with self-flattery, dream one might perchance
Successfully have claimed it. Gaze with joy!
So vast, so boundless, all before thee lies!
And youth, with hope inspired, allures thee on
Towards the future's unknown, sunny realms!
My bosom, heave! propitious seasons smile
Once more with genial influence on this plant!
It springeth heavenward, and shooteth out
A thousand branches that unfold in bloom.
Oh, may it bring forth fruit, — ambrosial fruit!
And may a hand beloved the golden spoil
Cull from its verdant and luxuriant boughs!

Scene III. — Tasso, Antonio.

TASSO.

Gladly I welcome thee: it seems indeed
As though I saw thee for the first time now!
Ne'er was arrival more auspicious. Welcome!
I know thee now, and all thy varied worth.
Promptly I offer thee my heart and hand,
And trust that thou wilt not despise my love.

ANTONIO.

Freely thou offerest a precious gift:
Its worth I duly estimate, and hence

Would pause awhile before accepting it.
I know not yet if I can render thee
A full equivalent. Not willingly
Would I o'erhasty or unthankful seem:
Let, then, my sober caution serve for both.

TASSO.

What man would censure caution? Every step
Of life doth prove that 'tis most requisite;
Yet nobler is it, when the soul reveals,
Where we, with prudent foresight, may dispense.

ANTONIO.

The heart of each be here his oracle,
Since each his error must himself atone.

TASSO.

So let it be! My duty I've performed:
It is the princess' wish we should be friends;
Her words I honoured and thy friendship sought.
I wished not to hold back, Antonio;
But I will never be importunate.
Time and more near acquaintance may induce thee
To give a warmer welcome to the gift
Which now thou dost reject, almost with scorn.

ANTONIO.

Oft is the moderate man named cold by those
Who think themselves more warm than other men,
Because a transient glow comes over them.

TASSO.

Thou blamest what I blame, — what I avoid.
Young as I am, I ever must prefer
Unshaken constancy to vehemence.

ANTONIO.

Most wisely said! Keep ever in this mind.

TASSO.

Thou'rt authorised to counsel and to warn;
For like a faithful, time-approvèd friend,
Experience holds her station at thy side.
But trust me, sir, the meditative heart
Attends the warning of each day and hour,
And practises in secret every virtue,
Which in thy rigour thou wouldst teach anew.

ANTONIO.

'Twere well to be thus occupied with self,
If it were only profitable too.
His inmost nature no man learns to know
By introspection: still he rates himself,
Sometimes too low, but oft, alas! too high.
Self-knowledge comes from knowing other men:
'Tis life reveals to each his genuine worth.

TASSO.

I listen with applause and reverence.

ANTONIO.

Yet to my words I know thou dost attach
A meaning wholly foreign to my thought.

TASSO.

Proceeding thus, we ne'er shall draw more near.
It is not prudent, 'tis not well, to meet
With purposed misconception any man,
Let him be who he may! The princess' word

I scarcely needed; — I have read thy soul:
Good thou dost purpose and accomplish too.
Thine own immediate fate concerns thee not.
Thou thinkest of others, others thou dost aid;
And on life's sea, vexed by each passing gale,
Thou holdest a heart unmoved. I view thee thus;
What, then, were I, did I not draw toward thee?
Did I not even keenly seek a share
Of the locked treasure which thy bosom guards?
Open thine heart to me, thou'lt not repent;
Know me, and I sure am thou'lt be my friend;
Of such a friend I long have felt the need.
My inexperience, my ungoverned youth,
Cause me no shame; for still around my brow
The future's golden clouds in brightness rest.
Oh, to thy bosom take me, noble man!
Into the wise, the temperate use of life
Initiate my rash, my unfledged youth.

ANTONIO.

Thou in a single moment wouldst demand
What time and circumspection only yield.

TASSO.

In one brief moment love has power to give
What anxious toil wins not in lengthened years.
I do not ask it from thee, I demand.
I summon thee in Virtue's sacred name,
For she is zealous to unite the good;
And shall I name to thee another name?
The princess, she doth wish it, — Leonora.
Me she would lead to thee, and thee to me.
Oh, let us meet her wish with kindred hearts!
United let us to the goddess haste,
To offer her our service, our whole souls,

Leagued to achieve for her the noblest aims.
Yet once again! — Here is my hand! Give thine!
I do entreat, hold thyself back no longer,
O noble man, and grudge me not the joy,
The good man's fairest joy, without reserve,
Freely to yield himself to nobler men!

ANTONIO.

Thou goest with full sail! It would appear
Thou'rt wont to conquer, everywhere to find
The pathways spacious and the portals wide.
I grudge thee not or merit or success, —
Only I see indeed, too plainly see,
We from each other stand too far apart.

TASSO.

It may be so in years and time-tried worth; —
In courage and good will I yield to none.

ANTONIO.

Good will doth oft prove deedless: courage still
Pictures the goal less distant than it is.
His brow alone is crowned who reaches it,
And oft a worthier must forego the crown.
Yet wreaths there are of very different fashion, —
Light, worthless wreaths, which, idly strolling on,
The loiterer oft without the toil obtains.

TASSO.

What a divinity to one accords,
And from another sternly doth withhold,
Is not obtained by each man as he lists.

ANTONIO.

To Fortune before other gods ascribe it:
I'll hear thee gladly, for her choice is blind.

TASSO.

Impartial Justice also wears a band,
And to each bright illusion shuts her eyes.

ANTONIO.

Fortune 'tis for the fortunate to praise!
Let him ascribe to her a hundred eyes
To scan desert, — stern judgment, and wise choice.
Call her Minerva, call her what he will,
He holds as just reward her golden gifts,
Chance ornament as symbol of desert.

TASSO.

Thou needest not speak more plainly. 'Tis enough!
Deeply I see into thine inmost heart,
And know thee now for life. Oh, would that so
My princess knew thee also! Lavish not
The arrows of thine eyes and of thy tongue!
In vain thou aimest at the fadeless wreath
Entwined around my brow. First be so great
As not to envy me the laurel wreath,
And then perchance thou mayst dispute the prize.
I deem it sacred, yea, the highest good;
Yet only show me him, who hath attained
That after which I strive; show me the hero,
Of whom on history's ample page I read;
The poet place before me, who himself
With Homer or with Virgil may compare;
Ay, what is more, let me behold the man
Who hath deserved threefold this recompense,

And yet can wear the laurel round his brow,
With modesty thrice greater than my own, —
Then at the feet of the divinity
Who thus endowed me, thou shouldst see me kneel,
Nor would I stand erect, till from my brow
She had to his the ornament transferred.

ANTONIO.

Till then thou'rt doubtless worthy of the crown.

TASSO.

Let me be justly weighed ; I shun it not:
But your contempt I never have deserved.
The wreath considered by my prince my due,
Which for my brow my princess' hand entwined,
None shall dispute with me, and none asperse!

ANTONIO.

This haughty tone, methinks, becomes thee not,
Nor this rash glow, unseemly in this place.

TASSO.

The tone thou takest here, becomes me too.
Say, from these precincts is the truth exiled?
Within the palace is free thought imprisoned?
Here must the noble spirit be oppressed?
This is nobility's appropriate seat, —
The soul's nobility! and may she not,
In presence of earth's mighty ones, rejoice?
She may and shall. Nobles draw near the prince
In virtue of the rank their sires bequeathed:
Why should not genius, then, which partial Nature
Grants, like a glorious ancestry, to few?

Here littleness alone should feel confused,
And envy shun to manifest its shame;
As no insidious spider should attach
Its noisome fabric to these marble walls.

ANTONIO.

Thyself dost show that my contempt is just!
The impetuous youth, forsooth, would seize by force
The confidence and friendship of the man!
Rude as thou art, doth think thyself of worth?

TASSO.

I'd rather be what thou esteemest rude,
Than what I must myself esteem ignoble.

ANTONIO.

Thou art still so young that wholesome chastisement
May tutor thee to hold a better course.

TASSO.

Not young enough to bow to idols down,
Yet old enough to conquer scorn with scorn.

ANTONIO.

From contests of the lip and of the lyre,
A conquering hero, thou mayst issue forth.

TASSO.

It were presumptuous to extol my arm;
As yet 'tis deedless; still I'll trust to it.

ANTONIO.

Thou trustest to forbearance, which too long
Hath spoiled thee in thine insolent career.

TASSO.

That I am grown to manhood, now I feel:
It would have been the farthest from my wish
To try with thee the doubtful game of arms;
But thou dost stir the inward fire; my blood,
My inmost marrow, boils; the fierce desire
Of vengeance seethes and foams within my breast.
Art thou the man thou boastest thyself, — then stand.

ANTONIO.

Thou knowest as little who, as where, thou art.

TASSO.

No fane so sacred as to shield contempt.
Thou dost blaspheme, thou dost profane, this spot,
Not I, who fairest offerings — confidence,
Respect, and love — for thine acceptance brought.
Thy spirit desecrates this paradise,
And thy injurious words this sacred hall, —
Not the indignant heaving of my breast,
Which boils to wipe away the slightest stain.

ANTONIO.

What a high spirit in a narrow breast!

TASSO.

Here there is space to vent the bosom's rage.

ANTONIO.

The rabble also vent their rage in words.

TASSO.

Art thou of noble blood as I am, draw.

ANTONIO.

I am, but I remember where I stand.

TASSO.

Come, then, below, where weapons may avail.

ANTONIO.

Thou shouldst not challenge, therefore I'll not follow.

TASSO.

To cowards welcome such impediments.

ANTONIO.

The coward only threats where he's secure.

TASSO.

With joy would I relinquish this defence.

ANTONIO.

Degrade thyself: degrade the place thou canst not.

TASSO.

The place forgive me that I suffered it!
(*He draws his sword.*)
Or draw or follow, if, as now I hate,
I'm not to scorn thee to eternity!

Scene IV. — Tasso, Antonio, Alphonso.

ALPHONSO.

In what unlooked-for strife I find you both?

ANTONIO.

Calm and unmoved, O prince, thou findest me here,
Before a man whom passion's rage hath seized!

TASSO.

As a divinity I worship thee
That thus thou tamest me with one warning look.

ALPHONSO.

Relate, Antonio, Tasso, tell me straight; —
Say, why doth discord thus invade my house?
How hath it seized you both, and hurried you
Confused and reeling from the beaten track
Of decency and law! I stand amazed.

TASSO.

I feel it, thou dost know nor him, nor me.
This man, reputed temperate and wise,
Hath toward me, like a rude, ill-mannered churl,
Behaved himself with spiteful insolence.
I sought him trustfully, he thrust me back:
With constancy I pressed myself on him;
And still, with growing bitterness imbued,
He rested not till he had turned to gall
My blood's pure current. Pardon! Thou, my prince,
Hast found me here, possessed with furious rage.
If guilty, to this man the guilt is due:
With violence he fanned the fiery glow
Which, seizing me, hath injured both of us.

ANTONIO.

Poetic frenzy hurried him away!
Thou hast, O prince! addressed thyself to me,
Hast questioned me: be it to me allowed
After this rapid orator to speak.

TASSO.

Oh, yes! repeat again each several word;
And if before this judge thou canst recall
Each syllable, each look, — then dare to do so!
Disgrace thyself a second time, and bear
Witness against thyself! I'll not disown
A single pulse-throb, nor a single breath.

ANTONIO.

If thou hast somewhat more to say, proceed;
If not, forbear, and interrupt me not.
Whether at first this fiery youth or I
Began this quarrel, whether he or I
Must bear the blame, is a wide question, prince,
Which stands apart, and need not be discussed.

TASSO.

How so? The primal question seems to me,
Which of the two is right, and which is wrong.

ANTONIO.

Not so precisely, as the ungoverned mind
Might first suppose.

ALPHONSO.

Antonio!

ANTONIO.

Gracious prince!
Thy hint I honour, but let him forbear;
When I have spoken, he may then proceed:
Thy voice must then decide. I've but to say,
I can no longer with this man contend;
Can nor accuse him, nor defend myself,
Nor give the satisfaction he desires;
For, as he stands, he is no longer free.
There hangeth over him a heavy law,
Which, at the most, thy favour may relax.
Here hath he dared to threat, to challenge me,
Scarce in thy presence sheathed his naked sword;
And if between us, prince, thou hadst not stepped,
Obnoxious to reproof, I now had stood,
Before thy sight, the partner of his fault.

ALPHONSO (*to* TASSO).

Thou hast not acted well.

TASSO.

Mine own heart, prince,
And surely thine, doth speak me wholly free.
Yes, true it is, I threatened, challenged, drew;
But how maliciously his guileful tongue,
With words well-chosen, pierced me to the quick!
How sharp and rapidly his biting tooth
The subtle venom in my blood infused!
How more and more the fever he inflamed —
Thou thinkest not! cold and unmoved himself,
He to the highest pitch excited me.
Thou knowest him not, and thou wilt never know him!
Warmly I tendered him the fairest friendship;
Down at my feet he flung the proffered gift:

And had my spirit not with anger glowed,
Of thy fair service and thy princely grace
I were for aye unworthy. If the law
I have forgotten, and this place, forgive!
The spot exists not where I dare be base,
Nor yet where I debasement dare endure.
But if this heart in any place be false,
Or to itself, or thee, — condemn, reject, —
And let me ne'er again behold thy face.

ANTONIO.

How easily the youth bears heavy loads,
And shaketh misdemeanours off like dust!
It were indeed a marvel, knew I not
Of magic poesy the wondrous power,
Which loveth still with the impossible
In frolic mood to sport. I almost doubt
Whether to thee, and to thy ministers,
This deed will seem so insignificant.
For Majesty extends its shield o'er all
Who draw near its inviolate abode,
And bow before it as a deity:
As at the altar's consecrated foot,
So on its sacred threshold rage subsides;
No sword there gleams, no threatening word resounds,
E'en injured innocence seeks no revenge.
The common earth affordeth ample scope
For bitter hate, and rage implacable.
There will no coward threat, no true man flee:
Thy ancestors, on sure foundations, based
These walls, fit shelter for their dignity,
And, with wise forecast, hedged the palace round
With fearful penalties. Of all transgressors,
Exile, confinement, death, the certain doom.
Respect of persons was not, nor did mercy
The arm of justice venture to restrain.

The boldest culprit felt himself o'erawed.
And now, after a lengthened reign of peace,
We must behold unlicensed rage invade
The realm of sacred order. Judge, O prince,
And punish! for unguarded by the law,
Unshielded by his sovereign, who will dare
To keep the narrow path that duty bounds?

ALPHONSO.

More than your words, or aught that ye could say,
My own impartial feelings let me heed.
If that your duty ye had both fulfilled,
I should not have this judgment to pronounce;
For here the right and wrong are near allied.
If that Antonio hath offended thee,
Due satisfaction he must doubtless give,
In such a sort as thou shalt choose to ask.
I gladly would be chosen arbiter.

(*To* TASSO.)

Meanwhile thy misdemeanour subjects thee
To brief confinement, Tasso. I forgive thee,
And therefore, for thy sake, relax the law.
Now leave us, and within thy chamber bide,
Thyself thy sole companion, thy sole guard.

TASSO.

Is this, then, thy judicial sentence, prince?

ANTONIO.

Discernest thou not a father's lenity?

TASSO (*to* ANTONIO).

With thee, henceforth, I have no more to say.
Thine earnest word, O prince, delivers me,

(*To* ALPHONSO).

A freeman to captivity! So be it!
Thou deemest it right. Thy sacred word I hear,
And counsel silence to mine inmost heart.
It seems so strange, so strange, — myself and thee,
This sacred spot I scarce can recognise.
Yet him I know full well. Oh! there is much
I might and ought to say, yet I submit.
My lips are mute. Was it indeed a crime?
At least, they treat me as a criminal.
Howe'er my heart rebel, I'm captive now.

ALPHONSO.

Thou takest it, Tasso, more to heart than I.

TASSO.

To me it still is inconceivable;
And yet not so, I am no child. Methinks
I should be able to unravel it.
A sudden light breaks in upon my soul;
As suddenly it leaves me in the dark;
I only hear my sentence, and submit.
These are, indeed, superfluous, idle words!
Henceforth inure thy spirit to obey.
Weak mortal! To forget where thou didst stand!
Thou didst forget how high the abode of gods.
And now art staggered by the sudden fall.
Promptly obey, for it becomes a man,
Each painful duty to perform with joy.
Take back the sword thou gavest me, what time
The cardinal I followed into France.
Though not with glory, not with shame, I wore it, —
No, not to-day. The bright, auspicious gift,
With heart sore troubled, I relinquish now.

ALPHONSO.

Thou knowest not, Tasso, how I feel toward thee.

TASSO.

My lot is to obey, and not to think!
And destiny, alas! demands from me
Renunciation of this precious gift.
Ill doth a crown become a captive's brow.
I from my head myself remove the wreath
Which seemed accorded for eternity.
Too early was the dearest bliss bestowed,
And is, alas! as if I had been boastful,
Too early taken away.
Thou takest back what none beside could take,
And what no god a second time accords.
We mortals are most wonderfully tried:
We could not bear it, were we not endowed
By Nature with a kindly levity.
Calmly necessity doth tutor us
With priceless treasures lavishly to sport:
Our hands we open of our own free will —
The prize escapes us, ne'er to be recalled.
A tear doth mingle with this parting kiss,
Devoting thee to mutability!
This tender sign of weakness may be pardoned!
Who would not weep when what was deemed immortal
Yields to destruction's power! Now to this sword
(Alas, it won thee not) ally thyself,
And round it twined, as on a hero's bier
Reposing, mark the grave where buried lie
My short-lived happiness, my withered hopes!
Here at thy feet, O prince, I lay them down!
For who is justly armed if thou art wroth?
Who justly crowned, on whom thy brow is bent?
I go a captive and await my doom. [*Exit.*

(*On a sign from the prince, a page raises the sword and wreath, and bears them away.*)

Scene V. — Alphonso, Antonio.

ANTONIO.

Whither doth frenzied fancy lead the boy?
And in what colours doth he picture forth
His high desert and glorious destiny?
Rash, inexperienced, youth esteems itself
A chosen instrument, and arrogates
Unbounded license. He has been chastised;
And chastisement is profit to the boy,
For which the man will render cordial thanks.

ALPHONSO.

He is chastised too painfully, I fear.

ANTONIO.

Art thou disposed to practise lenity,
Restore to him his liberty, O prince!
And then the sword may arbitrate our strife.

ALPHONSO.

So be it, if the public voice demands.
But tell me, how didst thou provoke his ire?

ANTONIO.

In sooth, I scarce can say how it befell.
As man, I may perchance have wounded him.
As nobleman, I gave him no offence.
And, in the very tempest of his rage,
No word unseemly hath escaped this lip.

ALPHONSO.

Of such a sort your quarrel seemed to me,
And your own word confirms me in my thought.
When men dispute we justly may esteem
The wiser the offender. Thou with Tasso
Shouldst not contend, but rather guide his steps:
It would become thee more. 'Tis not too late.
The sword's decision is not called for here.
So long as I am blessed with peace abroad,
So long would I enjoy it in my house.
Restore tranquillity, — thou canst with ease.
Leonora Sanvitale may at first
Attempt to soothe him with her honeyed lip;
Then go thou to him; in my name restore
His liberty; with true and noble words
Endeavour to obtain his confidence.
Accomplish this with all the speed thou canst:
As a kind friend and father speak with him.
Peace I would know restored ere I depart:
All, if thou wilt, is possible to thee.
We gladly will remain another hour,
Then leave it to the ladies' gentle tact
To consummate the work commenced by thee.
So when we come again, the last faint trace
Of this rash quarrel will be quite effaced.
It seems thy talents will not rust, Antonio!
Scarcely hast thou concluded one affair,
And on thy first return thou seekest another.
In this new mission may success be thine!

ANTONIO.

I am ashamed: my error in thy words,
As in the clearest mirror, I discern!
How easy to obey a noble prince
Who doth convince us while he doth command!

ACT III.

Scene I.

PRINCESS (*alone*).

Where tarries Leonora? Anxious fear,
Augmenting every moment, agitates
My inmost heart. Scarce know I what befell;
Which party is to blame I scarcely know.
Oh, that she would return! I would not yet
Speak with my brother, with Antonio,
Till I am more composed, till I have heard
How matters stand, and what may be the issue.

Scene II. — Princess, Leonora.

PRINCESS.

What tidings, Leonora? Tell me all:
How stands it with our friends? Say, what befell?

LEONORA.

More than I knew before I have not learned.
Contention rose between them; Tasso drew;
Thy brother parted them: yet it would seem
That it was Tasso who began the fray.
Antonio is at large, and with his prince
Converses freely. Tasso, in his chamber,
Abides meanwhile, a captive and alone.

PRINCESS.

Doubtless Antonio irritated him,
And met with cold disdain the high-toned youth.

LEONORA.

I do believe it: when he joined us first,
A cloud already brooded o'er his brow.

PRINCESS.

Alas, that we so often disregard
The pure and silent warnings of the heart!
Softly a god doth whisper in our breast,
Softly, yet audibly, doth counsel us,
Both what we ought to seek and what to shun.
This morn Antonio hath appeared to me
E'en more abrupt than ever, — more reserved.
When at his side I saw our youthful bard,
My spirit warned me. Only mark of each
The outward aspect, — countenance and tone,
Look, gesture, bearing! Everything opposed:
Affection they can never interchange.
Yet Hope persuaded me, the flatterer:
They both are sensible, she fondly urged,
Both noble, gently nurtured, and thy friends.
What bond more sure than that which links the good?
I urged the youth: with what devoted zeal,
How ardently, he gave himself to me!
Would I had spoken to Antonio then!
But I delayed; so recent his return,
That I felt shy, at once and urgently,
To recommend the youth to his regard:
On custom I relied, and courtesy,
And on the common usage of the world,
E'en between foes which smoothly intervenes.
I dreaded not from the experienced man
The rash impetuosity of youth.
The ill seemed distant, now, alas, 'tis here.
Oh, give me counsel! What is to be done?

LEONORA.

Thy words, my princess, show that thou dost feel
How hard it is to counsel. 'Tis not here
Between congenial minds a misconception:
A word, if needful an appeal to arms,

Peace in such case might happily restore.
Two men they are, who therefore are opposed,
I've felt it long, because by Nature cast
In moulds so opposite, that she the twain
Could never weld into a single man.
And were they to consult their common weal,
A league of closest friendship they would form:
Then as one man their path they would pursue,
With power and joy and happiness through life.
I hoped it once, I now perceive in vain.
To-day's contention, whatsoe'er the cause,
Might be appeased; but this assures us not
Or for the morrow, or for future time.
Methinks 'twere best, that Tasso for awhile
Should journey hence: to Rome he might repair,
To Florence also bend forthwith his course;
A few weeks later I should meet him there,
And as a friend could work upon his mind:
Thou couldest here meanwhile Antonio,
Who has become almost a stranger to us,
Once more within thy friendly circle bring;
And thus benignant time, that grants so much,
Might grant, perchance, what seems impossible.

PRINCESS.

A happiness will thus, my friend, be thine,
Which I must needs forego; say, is that right?

LEONORA.

Thou only wouldst forego what thou thyself,
As things at present stand, couldst not enjoy.

PRINCESS.

So calmly shall I banish hence a friend?

LEONORA.

Rather retain whom thou dost seem to banish.

PRINCESS.

The duke will ne'er consent to part with him.

LEONORA.

When he shall see as we do, he will yield.

PRINCESS.

'Tis painful in one's friend to doom one's self.

LEONORA.

Yet, with thy friend, thou'lt also save thyself.

PRINCESS.

I cannot give my voice that this shall be.

LEONORA.

An evil still more grievous then expect.

PRINCESS.

Thou givest me pain, — uncertain thy success.

LEONORA.

Ere long we shall discover who doth err.

PRINCESS.

Well, if it needs must be so, say no more.

LEONORA.

He conquers grief who firmly can resolve.

PRINCESS.

Resolved I am not: nathless let it be,
If he for long doth not absent himself;
And let us, Leonora, care for him,
That he may never be oppressed by want,
But that the duke, e'en in a distant land,
May graciously assign him maintenance.
Speak with Antonio: with my brother he
Can much accomplish, and will not remember
The recent strife, against our friend or us.

LEONORA.

Princess, a word from thee would more avail.

PRINCESS.

I cannot, well thou knowest, Leonora,
Solicit favours for myself and friends,
As my dear sister of Urbino can.
A calm, secluded life I'm fain to lead,
And from my brother gratefully accept
Whate'er his princely bounty freely grants.
For this reluctance once I blamed myself:
I've conquered now, and blame myself no more.
A friend full oft would censure me, and say,
Unselfish art thou, and unselfishness
Is good; but thou dost carry it so far,
That even the requirements of a friend
Thou canst not rightly feel. I let it pass,
And even this reproach must also bear.
It doth the more rejoice me, that I now
Can be in truth of service to our friend:
My mother's heritage descends to me,
And to his need I'll gladly minister.

LEONORA.

Princess, I, too, can show myself his friend.
In truth he is no thrifty manager:
My skilful aid shall help him where he fails.

PRINCESS.

Well, take him then, — if part with him I must,
To thee before all others be he given:
I now perceive it will be better so.
This sorrow also must my spirit hail
As good and wholesome? Such my doom from youth:
I am inured to it. But half we feel
Renunciation of a precious joy,
When we have deemed its tenure insecure.

LEONORA.

Happy according to thy high desert
I hope to see thee.

PRINCESS.

Leonora! Happy?
Who, then, is happy? — So indeed I might
Esteem my brother, for his constant mind
Still with unswerving temper meets his fate;
Yet even he ne'er reaped as he deserved.
My sister of Urbino, is she happy?
With beauty gifted and a noble heart!
Childless she's doomed to live: her younger lord
Values her highly, and upbraids her not;
But happiness is stranger to their home.
Of what avail our mother's prudent skill,
Her varied knowledge, and her ample mind?
Her could they shield from foreign heresy?
They took us from her: now she is no more,
And, dying, left us not the soothing thought,
That, reconciled with God, her spirit passed.

LEONORA.

Oh, mark not only that which fails to each,
Consider rather what to each remains!
And, princess, what doth not remain to thee?

PRINCESS.

What doth remain to me, Leonora? Patience!
Which I have learned to practise from my youth.
When friends and kindred, knit in social love,
In joyous pastime whiled the hours away,
Sickness held me a captive in my chamber;
And, in the sad companionship of pain,
I early learned the lesson, — to endure!
One pleasure cheered me in my solitude, —
The joy of song. I communed with myself,
And lulled, with soothing tones, the sense of pain.
The restless longing, the unquiet wish,
Till sorrow oft would grow to ravishment,
And sadness' self to harmony divine.
Not long, alas! this comfort was allowed:
The leech's stern monition silenced me;
I was condemned to live and to endure
E'en of this sole remaining joy bereft.

LEONORA.

Yet many friends attached themselves to thee;
And now thou art in health, art joyous too.

PRINCESS.

I am in health; that is, I am not sick,
And many friends I have, whose constancy
Doth cheer my heart; and, ah! I had a friend —

LEONORA.

Thou hast him still.

PRINCESS.

But soon must part with him.
That moment was of deep significance
When first I saw him. Scarce was I restored
From many sorrows; sickness and dull pain
Were scarce subdued; with shy and timid glance
I gazed once more on life, once more rejoiced
In the glad sunshine and my kindred's love
And hope's delicious balm inhaled anew;
Forward I ventured into life to gaze,
And friendly forms saluted me from far;
Then was it, Leonora, that my sister
First introduced to me the youthful bard:
She led him hither; and, shall I confess? —
My heart embraced him, and will hold for aye.

LEONORA.

My princess! Let it not repent thee now!
To apprehend the noble is a gain
Of which the soul can never be bereft.

PRINCESS.

The fair, the excellent, we needs must fear:
'Tis like a flame, which nobly serveth us,
So long as on our household hearth it burns,
Or sheds its lustre from the friendly torch.
How lovely then! Who can dispense with it?
But if, unwatched, it spreads destruction round,
What anguish it occasions! Leave me now,
I babble; and 'twere better to conceal,
Even from thee, how weak I am and sick.

LEONORA.

The sickness of the heart doth soonest yield
To tender plaints and soothing confidence.

PRINCESS.

If in confiding love a cure be found,
I'm whole, so strong my confidence in thee.
Alas! my friend, I am indeed resolved:
Let him depart! But, ah! I feel already
The long-protracted anguish of the day
When I must all forego that glads me now.
His beauteous form, transfigured in my dream,
The morning sun will dissipate no more;
No more the blissful hope of seeing him,
With joyous longing, fill my waking sense;
Nor, to discover him, my timid glance
Search wistfully our garden's dewy shade.
How sweetly was the tender hope fulfilled
To spend each eve in intercourse with him!
How, while conversing, the desire increased,
To know each other ever more and more;
And still our souls, in sweet communion joined,
Were daily tuned to purer harmonies.
What twilight-gloom now falls around my path!
The gorgeous sun, the genial light of day,
Of this fair world the splendours manifold,
Shorn of their lustre, are enveloped all
In the dark mist which now environs me.
In bygone times, each day comprised a life:
Hushed was each care, mute each foreboding voice.
And, happily embarked, we drifted on,
Without a rudder, o'er life's lucid wave.
Now, in the darkness of the present hour,
Futurity's vague terrors seize my soul.

LEONORA.

The future will restore to thee thy friend,
And bring to thee new happiness, new joy.

PRINCESS.

What I possess, that would I gladly hold:
Change may divert the mind, but profits not.
With youthful longing I have never joined
The motley throng who strive from fortune's urn
To snatch an object for their craving hearts.
I honoured him, and could not choose but love him,
For that with him my life was life indeed,
Filled with a joy I never knew before.
At first I whispered to my heart, beware!
Shrinking I shunned, yet ever drew more near.
So gently lured, so cruelly chastised!
A pure, substantial blessing glides away;
And, for the joy that filled my yearning heart,
Some demon substitutes a kindred pain.

LEONORA.

If friendship's soothing words console thee not,
This beauteous world's calm power, and healing time,
Will imperceptibly restore thy heart.

PRINCESS.

Ay, beauteous is the world; and many a joy
Floats through its wide dominion here and there.
Alas! That ever, by a single step,
As we advance, it seemeth to retreat,
Our yearning souls along the path of life
Thus step by step alluring to the grave!
To mortal man so seldom is it given
To find what seemed his heaven-appointed bliss;
Alas! so seldom he retains the good
Which, in auspicious hour, his hand had grasped;
The treasure to our heart that came unsought
Doth tear itself away, and we ourselves
Yield that which once with eagerness we seized.

There is a bliss, but, ah! we know it not:
We know it, but we know not how to prize.

Scene III.

LEONORA (*alone*).

The good and noble heart my pity moves:
How sad a lot attends her lofty rank!
Alas, she loses! — thinkest thou to win?
Is his departure hence so requisite?
Or dost thou urge it for thyself alone, —
To make the heart and lofty genius thine,
Which now thou sharest, — and unequally?
Is't honest so to act? What lackest thou yet?
Art thou not rich enough? Husband and son,
Possessions, beauty, rank, — all these thou hast,
And him wouldst have beside? What? Lovest thou him?
How comes it else that thou canst not endure
To live without him? This thou darest confess!
How charming is it in his mind's clear depths
One's self to mirror! Doth not every joy
Seem doubly great and noble, when his song
Wafts us aloft as on the clouds of heaven?
Then first thy lot is worthy to be envied!
Not only hast thou what the many crave,
But each one knoweth what thou art and hast!
Thy fatherland doth proudly speak thy name:
This is the pinnacle of earthly bliss.
Is Laura's, then, the only favoured name
That aye from gentle lips shall sweetly flow?
Is it Petrarca's privilege alone,
To deify an unknown beauty's charms?
Who is there that with Tasso can compare?
As now the world exalts him, future time

With honour due shall magnify his name.
What rapture, in the golden prime of life,
To feel his presence, and with him to near,
With airy tread, the future's hidden realm!
Thus should old age and time their influence lose,
And powerless be the voice of rumour bold,
Whose breath controls the billows of applause.
All that is transient in his song survives;
Still art thou young, still happy, when the round
Of changeful time shall long have borne thee on.
Him thou must have, yet takest nought from her.
For her affection to the gifted man
Doth take the hue her other passions wear:
Pale as the tranquil moon, whose feeble rays
Dimly illumine the night-wanderer's path,
They gleam, but warm not, and diffuse around
No blissful rapture, no keen sense of joy.
If she but know him happy, though afar,
She will rejoice, as when she saw him daily.
And then, 'tis not my purpose from this court,
From her, to banish both myself and friend.
I will return, will bring him here again.
So let it be! — My rugged friend draws near:
We soon shall see if we have power to tame him.

Scene IV. — Leonora, Antonio.

LEONORA.

War and not peace thou bringest: it would seem
As camest thou from a battle, from a camp,
Where violence bears sway, and force decides,
And not from Rome, where solemn policy
Uplifts the hand to bless a prostrate world,
Which she beholds obedient at her feet.

ANTONIO.

I must admit the censure, my fair friend;
But my apology lies close at hand.
'Tis dangerous to be compelled so long
To wear the show of prudence and restraint.
Still at our side an evil genius lurks,
And, with stern voice, demands from time to time
A sacrifice, which I, alas! to-day
Have offered, to the peril of my friends.

LEONORA.

Thou hast so long with strangers been concerned,
And to their humours hast conformed thine own,
That, once more with thy friends, thou dost their aims
Mistake, and as with strangers dost contend.

ANTONIO.

Herein, beloved friend, the danger lies!
With strangers we are ever on our guard,
Still are we aiming with observance due,
To win their favour which may profit us:
But, with our friends, we throw off all restraint;
Reposing in their love, we give the rein
To peevish humour; passion uncontrolled
Doth break its bounds; and those we hold most dear
Are thus amongst the first whom we offend.

LEONORA.

In this calm utterance of a thoughtful mind
I gladly recognise my friend again.

ANTONIO.

Yes: it has much annoyed me, I confess,
That I to-day so far forgot myself.

But yet admit, that when a valiant man
From irksome labour comes, with heated brow,
Thinking to rest himself for further toil,
In the cool eve beneath the longed-for shade,
And finds it, in its length and breadth, possessed
Already by some idler, he may well
Feel something human stirring in his breast!

LEONORA.

If he is truly human, then, methinks,
He gladly will partake the shade with one
Who lightens toil and cheers the hour of rest
With sweet discourse and soothing melodies.
Ample, my friend, the tree that casts the shade;
Nor either needs the other dispossess.

ANTONIO.

We will not bandy similes, fair friend.
Full many a treasure doth the world contain,
Which we to others yield and with them share:
But there exists one prize, which we resign
With willing hearts to high desert alone;
Another that, without a secret grudge,
We share not even with the highest worth —
And, wouldst thou touching these two treasures ask,
They are the laurel, and fair woman's smile.

LEONORA.

How! Hath yon chaplet round our stripling's brow
Given umbrage to the grave, experienced man?
Say, for his toil divine, his lofty verse,
Couldst thou thyself a juster meed select?
A ministration in itself divine,
That floateth in the air in tuneful tones,
Evoking airy forms to charm our souls —
Such ministration, in expressive form,

Or graceful symbol, finds its fit reward.
As doth the bard scarce deign to touch the earth,
So doth the laurel lightly touch his brow.
His worshippers, with barren homage, bring,
As tribute meet, a fruitless branch, that thus
They may with ease acquit them of their debt.
Thou dost not grudge the martyr's effigy,
The golden radiance round the naked head;
And, certes, where it rests, the laurel crown
Is more a sign of sorrow than of joy.

ANTONIO.

How, Leonora! Would thy lovely lips
Teach me to scorn the world's poor vanities?

LEONORA.

There is no need, my friend, to tutor thee
To prize each good according to its worth.
Yet it would seem that, e'en like common men,
The sage philosopher, from time to time,
Needs that the treasures he is blest withal,
In their true light before him be displayed.
Thou, noble man, wilt not assert thy claim
To a mere empty phantom of renown.
The service that doth bind thy prince to thee,
By means of which thou dost attach thy friends,
Is true, is living service; hence the meed
Which doth reward it must be living too.
Thy laurel is thy sovereign's confidence,
Which, like a cherished burden, gracefully
Reposes on thy shoulders, — thy renown,
Thy crown of glory, is the general trust.

ANTONIO.

Thou speakest not of woman's smile, — that, surely,
Thou wilt not tell me is superfluous.

LEONORA.

As people take it. Thou dost lack it not;
And lighter far, were ye deprived of it,
To thee would be the loss than to our friend.
For, say a woman were in thy behalf
To task her skill, and in her fashion strive
To care for thee, dost think she would succeed?
With thee security and order dwell;
And as for others, for thyself thou carest;
Thou dost possess what friendship fain would give;
Whilst in our province he requires our aid.
A thousand things he needs, which, to supply,
Is to a woman no unwelcome task.
The fine-spun linen, the embroidered vest,
He weareth gladly, and endureth not,
Upon his person, aught of texture rude,
Such as benefits the menial. For with him
All must be rich and noble, fair and good;
And yet, all this to win, he lacks the skill,
Nor, even when possessed, can he retain;
Improvident, he's still in want of gold;
Nor from a journey e'er returneth home,
But a third portion of his goods is lost.
His valet plunders him; and thus, Antonio,
The whole year round one has to care for him.

ANTONIO.

And these same cares endear him more and more.
Much-favoured youth, to whom his very faults
As virtue count, to whom it is allowed
As man to play the boy, and who forsooth
May proudly boast his charming weaknesses!
Thou must forgive me, my fair friend, if here
Some little touch of bitterness I feel.
Thou sayest not all, — sayest not how he presumes,
And proves himself far shrewder than he seems.

He boasts two tender flames! The knots of love,
As fancy prompts him, he doth bind and loose,
And wins with such devices two such hearts!
Is't credible?

LEONORA.

Well! Well! This only proves
That 'tis but friendship that inspires our hearts.
And, e'en if we returned him love for love,
Should we not well reward his noble heart,
Who, self-oblivious, dreams his life away
In lovely visions to enchant his friends?

ANTONIO.

Go on! Go on! Spoil him yet more and more;
Account his selfish vanity for love;
Offend all other friends, with honest zeal
Devoted to your service; to his pride
Pay voluntary tribute; quite destroy
The beauteous sphere of social confidence!

LEONORA.

We are not quite so partial as thou thinkest:
In many cases we exhort our friend.
We wish to mould his mind, that he may know
More happiness himself, and be a source
Of purer joy to others. What in him
Doth merit blame is not concealed from us.

ANTONIO.

Yet much that's blamable in him ye praise.
I've known him long, so easy 'tis to know him:
Too proud he is to wear the least disguise.
We see him now retire into himself,

As if the world were rounded in his breast;
Lost in the working of that inner world,
The outward universe he casts aside:
And his rapt spirit, self-included, rests.
Anon, as when a spark doth fire a mine,
Upon a touch of sorrow or of joy,
Anger or whim, he breaks impetuous forth.
Now he must compass all things, all retain,
All his caprices must be realised;
What should have ripened slowly through long years,
Must, in a moment, reach maturity;
And obstacles, which years of patient toil
Could scarce remove, be levelled in a trice.
He from himself the impossible demands,
That he from others may demand it too:
The extremest limits of existing things
His soul would hold in contiguity;
This one man in a million scarce achieves,
And he is not that man: at length he falls,
No whit the better, back into himself.

LEONORA.

Others he injures not, himself he injures.

ANTONIO.

Yet others he doth outrage grievously.
Canst thou deny, that in his passion's height,
Which o'er his spirit oft usurps control,
The prince and e'en the princess he contemns,
And dares at whom he may to hurl abuse?
True, for a moment only it endures;
But then, the moment quickly comes again.
His tongue, as little as his breast, he rules.

LEONORA.

To me, indeed, it seems advisable,
That he should leave Ferrara for awhile: —
Himself would benefit, and others too.

ANTONIO.

Perchance, — perchance, too, not. But now, my friend,
It is not to be thought of. For myself,
I will not on my shoulders bear the blame.
It might appear as if I drove him hence.
I drive him not. As far as I'm concerned,
He at the court may tarry undisturbed;
And if with me he will be reconciled,
And to my counsel if he will give heed,
We may live peaceably enough together.

LEONORA.

Now thou dost hope to work upon a mind
Which lately thou didst look upon as lost.

ANTONIO.

We always hope; and still, in every case,
'Tis better far to hope than to despair:
For who can calculate the possible?
Our prince esteems him; he must stay with us;
And, if we strive to fashion him in vain,
He's not the only one we must endure.

LEONORA.

So free from passion and from prejudice
I had not thought thee: — thy conversion's sudden.

ANTONIO.

Age must, my friend, this one advantage claim,
That, though from error it be not exempt,

Its balance it recovers speedily.
Thou didst at first essay to heal the breach
Between thy friend and me. I urge it now.
Do what thou canst to bring him to himself,
And to restore things to their wonted calm.
Myself will visit him, when I shall know,
From thee, that he is tranquil, when thou thinkest
My presence will not aggravate the evil.
But what thou dost, that do within the hour:
Alphonso will return to town ere night;
I must attend him there. Meanwhile, farewell.

Scene V.

LEONORA (*alone*).

For once, dear friend, we are not of one mind:
Our separate interests go not hand in hand.
I'll use the time to compass my design,
And will endeavour to win Tasso. Quick!

ACT IV.

Scene I. — *A Chamber.*

TASSO (*alone*).

Art thou awakened from a dream, and is
The fair delusion suddenly dissolved?
Thee, in fruition of the highest joy,
Hath sleep o'ermastered, and now holds thy soul
Tortured and bound with heavy fetters? Ay,
Thou art awake, and dreamest? Where the hours
That round thy head with flowery garlands played?
The days, when unrestrained thy yearning soul
Freely explored the heaven's o'erarching blue?

Thou'rt living still; art sensible to touch;
Feelest, yet knowest not if thou livest still.
Say! for mine own or for another's fault,
Am I, as criminal, thus captive here?
Have I been guilty that I suffer thus?
Is not my fancied crime a merit rather?
With kindly feeling I encountered him,
Persuaded by the heart's delusive hope,
He must be man who bears a mortal form:
With open arms I sped to his embrace,
And felt no human breast but bolts and bars.
Oh, had I but with prudent forecast weighed,
How I most fitly could receive the man,
Who from the first inspired me with mistrust!
Let me, however, whatso'er betide,
For ever to this one assurance cling: —
'Twas she herself! She stood before my view!
She spoke to me! I hearkened to her voice!
Her look, her tone, her words' sweet import, — these,
These are for ever mine; nor time nor fate,
Nor ruthless chance, can plunder me of these!
And if my spirit hath too swiftly soared,
If all too promptly in my breast I gave
Vent to the flame which now consumes my heart,
So let it be, — I never can repent,
E'en though my fortune were for ever wrecked.
To her devoted, I obey with joy
The hand that beckoned me to ruin's brink.
So let it be! Thus have I proved myself
Deserving of the precious confidence
That cheers my soul, — ay, cheers it in this hour
When cruel fate unlocks the sable gates
Of long-protracted woe. — Yes, now 'tis done!
For me the sun of gracious favour sets,
Never to rise again: his glance benign
The prince withdraws, and leaves me standing here,
Abandoned on this narrow, gloomy path.

The hateful and ill-boding feathered throng,
Obscene attendants upon ancient night,
Swarm forth, and whirl round my devoted head.
Whither, oh, whither, shall I bend my steps,
To shun the loathsome brood that round me flit,
And 'scape the dread abyss that yawns before?

Scene II. — Leonora, Tasso.

LEONORA.

Dear Tasso, what hath chanced? Hath passion's glow,
Hath thy suspicious temper, urged thee thus?
How hath it happened? We are all amazed.
Where now thy gentleness, thy suavity,
Thy rapid insight, thy discernment just,
Which doth award to every man his due;
Thine even mind, which beareth, what to bear
The wise are prompt, the vain are slow, to learn;
The prudent mastery over lip and tongue?
I scarcely recognise thee now, dear friend.

TASSO.

And what if all were gone, — for ever gone!
If as a beggar thou shouldst meet the friend
Whom just before thou hadst deemed opulent!
Thou speakest truth: I am no more myself.
Yet I am as much so as I was.
It seems a riddle, yet it is not one.
The tranquil moon, that cheers thee through the night,
Whose gentle radiance, with resistless power,
Allures thine eye, thy soul, doth float by day
An insignificant and pallid cloud.
In the bright glare of daylight I am lost:
Ye know me not, I scarcely know myself.

LEONORA.

Such words, dear friend, as thou hast uttered them,
I cannot comprehend. Explain thyself.
Say, hath that rugged man's offensive speech
So deeply wounded thee, that now thou dost
Misjudge thyself and us? Confide in me.

TASSO.

I'm not the one offended. Me thou seest
Thus punished here because I gave offence.
The knot of many words the sword would loose
With promptitude and ease; but I'm not free.
Thou art scarce aware, — nay, start not, gentle friend, —
'Tis in a prison thou dost meet me here.
Me, as a schoolboy, doth the prince chastise, —
His right I neither can nor will dispute.

LEONORA.

Thou seemest moved beyond what reason warrants.

TASSO.

Dost deem me, then, so weak, so much a child,
That this occurrence could o'erwhelm me thus?
Not what has happened wounds me to the quick,
'Tis what it doth portend, that troubles me.
Now let my foes conspire! The field is clear.

LEONORA.

Many thou holdest falsely in suspect:
Of this, dear friend, I have convinced myself.
Even Antonio bears thee no ill will,
As thou presumest. The quarrel of to-day —

TASSO.

Let that be set aside: I only view
Antonio as he was and yet remains.
Still hath his formal prudence fretted me,
His proud assumption of the master's tone.
Careless to learn whether the listener's mind
Doth not itself the better track pursue,
He tutors thee in much which thou thyself
More truly, deeply feelest; gives no heed
To what thou sayest, and perverts thy words.
Misconstrued thus by a proud man, forsooth,
Who smiles superior from his fancied height!
I am not yet or old or wise enough
To answer meekly with a patient smile.
It could not hold; we must at last have broken;
The evil greater had it been postponed.
One lord I recognise, who fosters me:
Him I obey, but own no master else.
In poesy and thought I will be free,
In act the world doth limit us enough.

LEONORA.

Yet often with respect he speaks of thee.

TASSO.

Thou meanest with forbearance, prudent, subtle.
'Tis that annoys me; for he knows to use
Language so smooth and so conditional,
That seeming praise from him is actual blame:
And there is nothing so offends my soul,
As words of commendation from his lip.

LEONORA.

Thou shouldst have heard but lately how he spoke
Of thee and of the gift which bounteous nature

So largely hath conferred on thee. He feels
Thy genius, Tasso, and esteems thy worth.

TASSO.

Trust me, no selfish spirit can escape
The torment of base envy. Such a man
Pardons in others honour, rank, and wealth;
For thus he argues, these thou hast thyself,
Or thou canst have them, if thou persevere.
Or if propitious fortune smile on thee.
But that which Nature can alone bestow,
Which aye remaineth inaccessible
To toil and patient effort, which nor gold,
Nor yet the sword, nor stern persistency,
Hath power to wrest, — that he will ne'er forgive.
Not envy me? The pedant who aspires
To seize by force the favour of the muse?
Who, when he strings the thoughts of other bards,
Fondly presumes he is a bard himself?
The prince's favour he would rather yield, —
Though that he fain would limit to himself, —
Than the rare gift which the celestial powers
Have granted to the poor, the orphaned youth.

LEONORA.

Oh that thy vision were as clear as mine!
Thou readest him wrongly, thou art deceived in him.

TASSO.

And if I err, I err with right good will!
I count him for my most inveterate foe,
And should be inconsolable were I
Compelled to think of him more leniently.
'Tis foolish in all cases to be just:
It is to wrong one's self. Are other men

Toward us so equitable? No, ah, no!
Man's nature, in its narrow scope, demands
The twofold sentiment of love and hate.
Requires he not the grateful interchange
Of day and night, of wakefulness and sleep?
No: from henceforward I do hold this man
The object of my direst enmity;
And nought can snatch from me the cherished joy
Of thinking of him ever worse and worse.

LEONORA.

Dear friend, I see not, if this feeling last,
How thou canst longer tarry at the court.
Thou knowest the just esteem in which he's held.

TASSO.

I'm fully sensible, fair friend, how long
I have already been superfluous here.

LEONORA.

That thou art not, that thou canst never be!
Thou rather knowest how both prince and princess
Rejoice to have thee in their company.
The sister of Urbino, comes she not
As much for thine as for her kindred's sake?
They all esteem thee, recognise thy worth,
And each confides in thee without reserve.

TASSO.

O Leonora! Call that confidence!
Of state affairs has he one single word,
One earnest word, vouchsafed to speak with me?
In special cases, when he has advised,
Both with the princess, and with others too,
To me, though present, no appeal was made.

The cry was ever then, Antonio comes!
Consult Antonio! To Antonio write!

LEONORA.

Thanks here, methinks, were juster than complaint.
Thus in unchallenged freedom leaving thee,
He to thy genius fitting homage pays.

TASSO.

He lets me rest, because he deems me useless.

LEONORA.

Thou art not useless, e'en because thou restest.
Care and vexation, like a child beloved,
Thou still dost cherish, Tasso, in thy breast.
It oft has struck me, and the more I think,
The more convinced I feel, on this fair soil,
Where fate auspicious seemed to plant thy lot,
Thou dost not flourish. — May I speak, my friend?
May I advise thee? — Thou shouldst hence depart.

TASSO.

Spare not thy patient, gentle leech! Extend
The draught medicinal, nor think thereon
If it is bitter. — This consider well,
Kind, prudent friend, if he can yet be cured!
I see it all myself, 'tis over now!
Him I indeed could pardon, he not me;
He's needful to them, I, alas! am not.
And he has prudence, I, alas! have none.
He worketh to my injury, and I
Cannot and will not counterwork. My friends
Leave things to chance; they see things otherwise;
They scarcely struggle, who should stoutly fight.

Thou thinkest I should depart, I think so too; —
Then, farewell, friends! — This, too, I must endure.
You're parted from me. — Oh, to me be given
The courage and the strength to part from you!

LEONORA.

Seen from a distance things show less confused,
That in the present serve but to perplex.
Perchance, when absent, thou wilt recognise
The love which here environs thee, wilt learn
The worth of friends, and feel how the wide world
Cannot replace those dearest to the heart.

TASSO.

I shall experience this! Alas! I've known
The world from early youth, how, pressing on,
She lightly leaves us, helpless and forlorn,
Like sun and moon and other deities.

LEONORA.

Dear friend, if thou wilt lend an ear to me,
This sad experience thou wilt not repeat.
If I may counsel thee, thou wilt at first
Repair to Florence, — there thou'lt find a friend
Will cherish thee most kindly, — 'tis myself!
Thither I travel soon to meet my lord;
And there is nothing would afford us, Tasso,
A richer pleasure than thy company.
I need not tell thee, for thyself dost know,
How noble is the prince who ruleth there;
What men, what women too, our favoured town
Doth cherish in her bosom. — Thou art silent!
Consider well my counsel, and resolve!

TASSO.

Full of sweet promise are thy words, dear friend,
And in accordance with my secret wish.
But 'tis too sudden: let me pause awhile, —
Let me consider! I will soon resolve!

LEONORA.

I leave thee now, and with the fairest hope
For thee, for us, and also for this house.
Only reflect, and weigh the matter well:
Thou scarcely wilt devise a better plan.

TASSO.

Yet one thing more, tell me, beloved friend,
How is the princess minded toward me? Speak!
Was she displeased with me? Give me her words. —
Hath she severely blamed me? Tell me all!

LEONORA.

She knows thee well, and therefore has excused thee.

TASSO.

Say, have I lost her friendship? Flatter not.

LEONORA.

A woman's friendship is not lightly lost.

TASSO.

Without reluctance will she let me go?

LEONORA.

If 'twill promote thy welfare, certainly.

TASSO.

Shall I not lose the favour of the prince?

LEONORA.

His nature's noble: thou mayest trust in him.

TASSO.

And shall we leave the princess all alone?
Thou leavest her; and though perhaps not much
I know full well that I was something, to her.

LEONORA.

An absent friend is sweet society,
When of his welfare we are well assured.
My plan succeeds, I see thee happy now:
Thou wilt not hence depart unsatisfied.
The prince commands, — Antonio seeks thee, Tasso.
He censures in himself the bitterness
With which he wounded thee. I do entreat,
Receive him with forbearance when he comes.

TASSO.

I have no cause to shun the interview.

LEONORA.

And oh dear friend, that Heaven would grant me this:
To make it clear to thee ere thou departest,
That in thy fatherland there is not one
Pursues thee, hates, or covertly molests.
Thou art deceived; and as for others' pleasure
Wont art thou still to poetise, alas!
Thou in this case dost weave a cunning web

To blind thyself, the which to rend asunder
I'll do mine utmost, that with vision clear
Thou mayest pursue life's glad career untrammelled.
Farewell! I hope for happy words ere long.

Scene III.

TASSO (*alone*).

I must believe, forsooth, that no one hates me, —
That no one persecutes, that all the guile,
The subtle malice, that environs me,
Is but the coinage of my own sick brain!
I must acknowledge that myself am wrong!
And am unjust to many, who in sooth
Deserve it not! What! This confess e'en now,
When clearly, in the open face of day,
Appear their malice and my rectitude!
I ought to feel most deeply, how the prince
To me with generous breast his grace imparts,
And in rich measure loads me with his gifts,
E'en at the time when he is weak enough
To let his eyes be blinded by my foes,
Yea, doubtless, and his hand be fettered too!

His own delusion he cannot perceive;
That they deluders are, I may not prove;
And that unchecked he may delude himself,
And they delude him whensoe'er they please,
I still must hold my peace, — must yield forsooth!

And who thus counsels me? With prudent zeal
And thoughtful kindness, who doth urge me thus?
Leonora's self, Leonora Santivale.
Considerate friend! Ha, ha, I know thee now!
Oh, wherefore did I ever trust her words?
She was not honest when she uttered forth

To me her favour and her tenderness
With honeyed words! No: hers hath ever been
And still remains a crafty heart: she turns
With cautious, prudent step where fortune smiles.
How often have I willingly deceived
Myself in her! And yet it was in truth
But mine own vanity deluded me!
I knew her, but, self-flattered, argued thus, —
True, she is so toward others; but toward thee
Her heart is honest, her intention pure.
Mine eyes are open now, — alas, too late!
I was in favour — on the favourite
How tenderly she fawned! I'm fallen now,
And she, like fortune, turns her back on me.

Yes, now she comes, the agent of my foe:
She glides along, the little artful snake,
Hissing, with slippery tongue, her magic tones.
How gracious seemed she! More than ever gracious!
How soothingly her honeyed accents flowed!
Yet could the flattery not long conceal
The false intention: on her brow appeared
Too legibly inscribed the opposite
Of all she uttered. Quick I am to feel
Whene'er the entrance to my heart is sought
With a dishonest purpose. I should hence!
Should hie to Florence with convenient speed.

And why to Florence? Ah, I see it all!
There reigns the rising house of Medici,
True, with Ferrara not in open feud;
But secret rivalry, with chilling hand,
Doth hold asunder e'en the noblest hearts.
If from those noble princes I should reap
Distinguished marks of favour, as indeed
I may anticipate, the courtier here

Would soon impugn my gratitude and truth,
And would, with easy wile, achieve his purpose.

Yes, I will go, but not as ye desire:
I will away, and farther than ye think.

Why should I linger? Who detains me here?
Too well I understood each several word
That I drew forth from Leonora's lips!
With anxious heed each syllable I caught;
And now I fully know the princess' mind, —
That, too, is certain: let me not despair!
"Without reluctance she will let me go
If it promote my welfare." Would her heart
Were mastered by a passion that would whelm
Me and my welfare! Oh, more welcome far
The grasp of death than of the frigid hand
That passively resigns me! — Yes, I go! —
Now be upon thy guard, and let no show
Of love or friendship bind thee! None hath power
Now to deceive thee, if not self-deceived.

Scene IV. — Antonio, Tasso.

ANTONIO.

Tasso, I come to say a word to thee,
If thou'rt disposed to hear me tranquilly.

TASSO.

I am denied, thou knowest, the power to act:
It well becomes me to attend and listen.

ANTONIO.

Tranquil I find thee, as I hoped to find,
And speak to thee in all sincerity.

But in the prince's name I first dissolve
The slender band that seemed to fetter thee.

TASSO.

Caprice dissolves it, as caprice imposed:
I yield, and no judicial sentence claim.

ANTONIO.

Next, Tasso, on my own behalf I speak.
I have, it seems, more deeply wounded thee,
Than I — myself by divers passions moved -
Was conscious of. But no insulting word
Hath from my lip incautiously escaped.
Nought hast thou, as a noble, to avenge,
And, as a man, wilt not refuse thy pardon.

TASSO.

Whether contempt or insult galls the most,
I will not now determine: that doth pierce
The inmost marrow, this but frets the skin.
The shaft of insult back returns to him
Who winged the missile, and the practised sword
Soon reconciles the opinion of the world —
A wounded heart is difficult to cure.

ANTONIO.

'Tis now my turn to press thee urgently:
Oh, step not back, yield to mine earnest wish,
The prince's wish, who sends me unto thee!

TASSO.

I know the claims of duty, and submit.
Be it, as far as possible, forgiven!
The poets tell us of a magic spear,

Which could a wound, inflicted by itself,
Through friendly contact, once again restore.
The human tongue hath also such a power:
I will not peevishly resist it now.

ANTONIO.

I thank thee, and desire that thou at once
Wouldst put my wish to serve thee to the proof.
Then say if I in aught can pleasure thee;—
Most gladly will I do so: therefore speak.

TASSO.

Thine offer tallies with my secret wish:
But now thou hast restored my liberty,
Procure for me, I pray, the use of it.

ANTONIO.

What meanest thou? More plainly state thy wish.

TASSO.

My poem, as thou knowest, I have ended:
Yet much it wants to render it complete.
To-day I gave it to the prince, and hoped
At the same time to proffer my request.
Full many of my friends I now should find
In Rome assembled; they have writ to me
Their judgments touching divers passages;
By many I could profit; others still
Require consideration; and some lines
I should be loath to alter, till at least
My judgment has been better satisfied.
All this by letter cannot be arranged,
While intercourse would soon untie the knots.
I thought myself to ask the prince to-day;

The occasion failed: I dare not venture now,
And must for this permission trust to thee.

ANTONIO.

It seems imprudent to absent thyself
Just at the moment when thy finished work
Commends thee to the princess and the prince.
A day of favour is a day of harvest:
We should be busy when the corn is ripe.
Nought wilt thou win if thou departest hence,
Perchance thou'lt lose what thou hast won already.
Presence is still a powerful deity, —
Learn to respect her influence, — tarry here!

TASSO.

I nothing have to fear: Alphonse is noble,
Such hath he always proved himself toward me; —
To his heart only will I owe the boon
Which now I crave. By no mean, servile arts
Will I obtain his favour. Nought will I receive
Which it can e'er repent him to have given.

ANTONIO.

Then, do not now solicit leave to go:
He will not willingly accord thy suit;
And much I fear he will reject it, Tasso.

TASSO.

Duly entreated, he will grant my prayer:
Thou hast the power to move him, if thou wilt.

ANTONIO.

But what sufficient reason shall I urge?

TASSO.

Let every stanza of my poem speak!
The scope was lofty that I aimed to reach,
Though to my genius inaccessible.
Labour and strenuous effort have not failed;
The cheerful stroll of many a lovely day,
The silent watch of many a solemn night,
Have to this pious lay been consecrate.
With modest daring I aspired too near
The mighty masters of the olden time;
With lofty courage planned to rouse our age
From lengthened sleep, to deeds of high emprise;
Then, with a Christian host, I hoped to share
The toil and glory of a holy war.
And, that my song may rouse the noblest men,
It must be worthy of its lofty aim.
What worth it hath is to Alphonso due:
For its completion I would owe him thanks.

ANTONIO.

The prince himself is here, with other men,
Able as those of Rome to be thy guides.
Here is thy station, here complete thy work:
Then haste to Rome to carry out thy plan.

TASSO.

Alphonso first inspired my muse, and he
Will be the last to counsel me. Thy judgment,
The judgment also of the learned men
Assembled at our court, I highly value:
Ye shall determine when my friends at Rome
Fail to produce conviction in my mind.
But them I must consult. Gonzaga there
Hath summoned a tribunal before which
I must present myself. I scarce can wait.
Flaminio de' Nobili, Angelio

Da Barga, Antoniano, and Speron Speroni!
To thee they must be known. — What names they are!
They in my soul, to worth which gladly yields,
Inspire at once both confidence and fear.

ANTONIO.

Self-occupied, thou thinkest not of the prince:
I tell thee that he will not let thee go.
And, if he does, 'twill be against his wish.
Thou wilt not surely urge what he to thee
Unwillingly would grant. And shall I here
Still mediate, what I cannot approve?

TASSO.

Dost thou refuse me, then, my first request
When I would put thy friendship to the proof?

ANTONIO.

Timely denial is the surest test
Of genuine friendship: love doth oft confer
A baneful good, when it consults the wish,
And not the happiness, of him who sues.
Thou, in this moment, dost appear to me
To overprize the object of thy wish,
Which, on the instant, thou wouldst have fulfilled.
The erring man would oft by vehemence
Compensate what he lacks in truth and power:
Duty enjoins me now, with all my might,
To check the rashness that would lead thee wrong.

TASSO.

I long have known this tyranny of friendship,
Which of all tyrannies appears to me

The least endurable. Because, forsooth,
Our judgments differ, thine must needs be right:
I gladly own that thou dost wish my welfare,
Require me not to seek it in thy way.

ANTONIO.

And wouldst thou have me, Tasso, in cold blood,
With full and clear conviction, injure thee?

TASSO.

I will at once absolve thee from this care!
Thou hast no power to hold me with thy words.
Thou hast declared me free: these doors which lead
Straight to the prince, stand open to me now.
The choice I leave to thee. Or thou or I!
The prince goes forth, no time is to be lost:
Determine promptly! Dost thou still refuse,
I go myself, let come of it what will.

ANTONIO.

A little respite grant me; not to-day:
Wait, I beseech thee, till the prince returns!

TASSO.

If it were possible, this very hour!
My soles are scorched upon this marble floor,
Nor can my spirit rest until the dust
Of the free highway shrouds the fugitive.
I do not entreat thee! How unfit I am
Now to appear before the prince thou seest;
And thou must see — how can I hide from thee —
That I'm no longer master of myself;
No power on earth can sway my energies;
Fetters alone can hold me in control!

No tyrant is the prince, he spake me free.
Once to his words how gladly I gave ear!
To-day to hearken is impossible.
Oh, let me have my freedom but to-day,
That my vexed spirit may regain its peace!
Back to my duty I will soon return.

ANTONIO.

Thou makest me dubious. How shall I resolve?
That error is contagious, I perceive.

TASSO.

If thy professions I'm to count sincere,
Perform what I desire, as well as thou canst.
Then will the prince release me, and I lose
Neither his favour nor his gracious aid.
For that I'll thank thee, — ay, with cordial thanks.
But if thy bosom bear an ancient grudge,
Wouldst thou for ever banish me this court,
For ever wouldst thou mar my destiny,
And drive me friendless forth into the world,
Then hold thy purpose and resist my prayer!

ANTONIO.

O Tasso! — for I'm doomed to injure thee, —
I choose the way which thou thyself dost choose:
The issue will determine who doth err!
Thou wilt away! I warn thee ere thou goest:
Scarce shalt thou turn thy back upon this house,
Ere thou shalt yearn in spirit to return,
While wilful humour still shall urge thee on.
Sorrow, distraction, and desponding gloom
In Rome await thee. There as well as here
Thou'lt miss thine aim. But this I do not say

To counsel thee: alas! I but predict
What soon will happen, and invite thee, Tasso,
In the worst exigence to trust to me.
I now, at thy desire, will seek the prince.

Scene V.

TASSO (*alone*).

Ay, go, and in the fond assurance go,
That thou hast power to bend me to thy will.
I learn dissimulation, for thou art
An able master, and I prompt to learn.
Thus life full oft compels us to appear,
Yea, e'en to be, like those whom in our hearts
We haughtily despise. How clearly now
I see the subtle web of court intrigue!
Antonio desires to drive me hence,
Yet would not seem to drive me. He doth play
The kind, considerate friend, that I may seem
Incapable and weak; installs himself
My guardian too, degrading to a child,
Him whom he could not bend to be a slave.
With clouds of error thus he darkens truth,
And blinds alike the princess and the prince.

They should indeed retain me, so he counsels,
For with fair talents Nature has endowed me;
Although, alas! she has accompanied
Her lofty gifts with many weaknesses,
With a foreboding spirit, boundless pride,
And sensibility too exquisite.
It cannot now be otherwise, since Fate,
In her caprice, has fashioned such a man:
We must consent to take him as he is,
Be patient, bear with him, and then, perchance,

On days auspicious, as an unsought good,
Find pleasure in his joy-diffusing gift;
While for the rest, why, e'en as he was born,
He must have license both to live and die.

Where now Alphonso's firm and constant mind?
The man who braves his foe, who shields his friend,
In him who treats me thus can I discover?
Now I discern the measure of my woe!
This is my destiny, — toward me alone
All change their nature, — ay, the very men
Who are with others steadfast, firm, and true,
In one brief moment, for an idle breath,
Swerve lightly from their constant quality.

Has not this man's arrival here, alone,
And in a single hour, my fortune marred?
Has he not, even to its very base,
Laid low the structure of my happiness?
This, too, must I endure, — even to-day!
Yea, as before all pressed around me, now
I am by all abandoned; as before
Each strove to seize, to win me for himself,
All thrust me from them, and avoid me now.
And wherefore? My desert, and all the love
Wherewith I was so bounteously endowed,
Does he alone in equal balance weigh?
Yes, all forsake me now. Thou too! Thou too!

Beloved princess, thou, too, leavest me!
Hath she, to cheer me in this dismal hour,
A single token of her favour sent?
Have I deserved this from her? — Thou poor heart,
Whose very nature was to honour her! —
How, when her gentle accents touched mine ear,
Feelings unutterable thrilled my breast!
When she appeared, a more ethereal light

Outshone the light of day. Her eyes, her lips,
Drew me resistlessly: my very knees
Trembled beneath me; and my spirit's strength
Was all required to hold myself erect,
And curb the strong desire to throw myself
Prostrate before her. Scarcely could I quell
The giddy rapture. Be thou firm, my heart!
No cloud obscure thee, thou clear mind! She too!
Dare I pronounce what yet I scarce believe?
I must believe, yet dread to utter it.
She too! She too! Think not the slightest blame,
Only conceal it not. She too! She too!

Alas! This word, whose truth I ought to doubt,
Long as a breath of faith survived in me, —
This word, like fate's decree, doth now at last
Engrave itself upon the brazen rim
That rounds the full-scrolled tablet of my woe.
Now first mine enemies are strong indeed:
For ever now I am of strength bereft.
How shall I combat when she stands opposed
Amidst the hostile army? How endure
If she no more reach forth her hand to me?
If her kind glance the suppliant meet no more?
Ay, thou hast dared to think, to utter it,
And, ere thou couldst have feared, — behold, 'tis true!
And now, ere yet despair, with brazen talons,
Doth rend asunder thy bewildered brain,
Lament thy bitter doom, and utter forth
The unavailing cry, She too! She too!

ACT V.

Scene I. — *A Garden.* — Alphonso, Antonio.

ANTONIO.

Obedient to thy wish, I went to Tasso
A second time: I come from him but now.
I sought to move him, yea, I strongly urged,
But from his fixed resolve he swerveth not;
He earnestly entreats, that for a time
Thou wouldst permit him to repair to Rome.

ALPHONSO.

His purpose much annoys me, I confess: —
I rather tell thee my vexation now,
Than let it strengthen, smothered in my breast.
He fain would travel, good! I hold him not.
He will depart, he will to Rome: so be it!
Let not the crafty Medici, nor yet
Scipio Gonzaga, wrest him from me, though!
'Tis this hath made our Italy so great,
That rival neighbours zealously contend
To foster and employ the ablest men.
Like chief without an army, shows a prince
Who round him gathers not superior minds;
And who the voice of Poesy disdains
Is a barbarian, be he who he may.
Tasso I found, I chose him for myself,
I number him with pride among my train;
And, having done so much for him already,
I should be loath to lose him without cause.

ANTONIO.

I feel embarrassed, prince; for in thy sight
I bear the blame of what to-day befell:

That I was in the wrong, I frankly own,
And look for pardon to thy clemency;
But I were inconsolable couldst thou,
E'en for a moment, doubt my honest zeal
In seeking to appease him. Speak to me
With gracious look, that so I may regain
My self-reliance and my wonted calm.

ALPHONSO.

Feel no disquietude, Antonio;—
In no wise do I count the blame as thine:
Too well I know the temper of the man,
Know all too well what I have done for him,
How often I have spared him, and how oft
Toward him I have overlooked my rightful claims.
O'er many things we gain the mastery,
But stern necessity and lengthened time
Scarce give a man dominion o'er himself.

ANTONIO.

When other men toil in behalf of one,
'Tis fit this one with diligence inquire
How he may profit others in return.
He who hath fashioned his own mind so well,
Who hath aspired to make each several science,
And the whole range of human lore, his own,
Is he not doubly bound to rule himself?
Yet doth he ever give it e'en a thought?

ALPHONSO.

Continued rest is not ordained for man.
Still, when we purpose to enjoy ourselves,
To try our valour, fortune sends a foe;
To try our equanimity, a friend.

ANTONIO.

Does Tasso e'en fulfil man's primal duty,
To regulate his appetite, in which
He is not, like the brute, restrained by nature?
Does he not rather, like a child, indulge
In all that charms and gratifies his taste?
When has he mingled water with his wine?
Comfits and condiments, and potent drinks,
One with another still he swallows down,
And then complains of his bewildered brain,
His hasty temper, and his fevered blood,
Railing at nature and at destiny.
How oft I've heard him in a bitter style
With childish folly argue with his leech.
'Twould raise a laugh, if aught were laughable
Which teases others and torments one's self.
"Oh, this is torture!" anxiously he cries,
Then, in splenetic mood, "Why boast your art?
Prescribe a cure!" — "Good!" then exclaims the leech.
"Abstain from this or that." — "That can I not." —
"Then, take this potion." — "No: it nauseates me,
The taste is horrid, nature doth rebel." —
"Well, then, drink water." — "Water! never more!
Like hydrophobia is my dread of it." —
"Then, your disease is hopeless." — "Why, I pray?" —
"One evil symptom will succeed another;
And, though your ailment should not fatal prove,
'Twill daily more torment you." — "Fine, indeed!
Then, wherefore play the leech? You know my case:
You should devise a remedy, and one
That's palatable too, that I may not
First suffer pain before relieved from it."
I see thee smile, my prince: 'tis but the truth;
Doubtless thyself hast heard it from his lips.

ALPHONSO.

Oft I have heard, and have as oft excused.

ANTONIO.

It is most certain, an intemperate life,
As it engenders wild, distempered dreams,
At length doth make us dream in open day.
What's his suspicion but a troubled dream?
He thinks himself environed still by foes.
None can discern his gift who envy not;
And all who envy, hate and persecute.
Oft with complaints he has molested thee:
Notes intercepted, violated locks,
Poison, the dagger! All before him float!
Thou dost investigate his grievance, — well,
Doth aught appear? Why, scarcely a pretext.
No sovereign's shelter gives him confidence.
The bosom of no friend can comfort him.
Wouldst promise happiness to such a man,
Or look to him for joy unto thyself?

ALPHONSO.

Thou wouldst be right, Antonio, if from him
I sought my own immediate benefit;
But I have learned no longer to expect
Service direct and unconditional.
All do not serve us in the selfsame way:
Who needeth much, according to his gifts
Must each employ, so is he ably served.
This lesson from the Medici we learned,
'Tis practised even by the popes themselves.
With what forbearance, magnanimity,
And princely patience, have they not endured
Full many a genius, who seemed not to need
Their ample favour, yet who needed it!

ANTONIO.

Who knows not this, my prince? The toil of life
Alone can tutor us life's gifts to prize.

In youth he hath already won so much,
He cannot relish aught in quietness.
Oh that he were compelled to earn the blessings
Which now with liberal hand are thrust upon him!
With manly courage he would brace his strength,
And at each onward step feel new content.
The needy noble has attained the height
Of his ambition, if his gracious prince
Raise him, with hand benign, from poverty,
And choose him as an inmate of the court.
Should he then honour him with confidence,
And before others raise him to his side,
Consulting him in war, or state affairs,
Why, then, methinks, with silent gratitude,
The modest man may bless his lucky fate.
And with all this, Tasso enjoys besides
Youth's purest happiness: — his fatherland
Esteems him highly, looks to him with hope.
Trust me for this, — his peevish discontent
On the broad pillow of his fortune rests.
He comes, dismiss him kindly, give him time
In Rome, in Naples, whereso'er he will,
To search in vain for what he misses here,
Yet here alone can ever hope to find.

ALPHONSO.

Back to Ferrara will he first return?

ANTONIO.

He rather would remain in Belriguardo.
And, for his journey, what he may require,
He will request a friend to forward to him.

ALPHONSO.

I am content. My sister, with her friend,
Returns immediately to town; and I,

Riding with speed, hope to reach home before them.
Thou'lt follow straight when thou for him hast cared;
Give needful orders to the castellan,
That in the castle he may here abide
So long as he desires, until his friend
Forward his equipage, and till the letters,
Which we shall give him to our friends at Rome,
Have been transmitted. Here he comes. Farewell!

Scene II. — Alphonso, Tasso.

TASSO (*with embarrassment*).

The favour thou so oft hast shown me, prince,
Is manifest, in clearest light, to-day.
The deed which, in the precincts of thy palace,
I lawlessly committed, thou hast pardoned;
Thou hast appeased and reconciled my foe;
Thou dost permit me for a time to leave
The shelter of thy side, and, rich in bounty,
Wilt not withdraw from me thy generous aid.
Inspired with confidence, I now depart,
And trust that this brief absence will dispel
The heavy gloom that now oppresses me.
My renovated soul shall plume her wing,
And pressing forward on the bright career,
Which, glad and bold, encouraged by thy glance,
I entered first, deserve thy grace anew.

ALPHONSO.

Prosperity attend thee on thy way!
With joyous spirit, and to health restored,
Return again amongst us. Thus thou shalt
To us, in double measure, for each hour
Thou now deprivest us of, requital bring.
Letters I give thee to my friends at Rome,

And also to my kinsmen, and desire
That to my people everywhere thou shouldst
Confidingly attach thyself; — though absent,
Thee I shall certainly regard as mine.

TASSO.

Thou dost, O prince! o'erwhelm with favours one
Who feels himself unworthy, who e'en wants
Ability to render fitting thanks.
Instead of thanks I proffer a request:
My poem now lies nearest to my heart.
My labours have been strenuous, yet I feel
That I am far from having reached my aim.
Fain would I there resort, where hovers yet
The inspiring genius of the mighty dead,
Still raining influence: there would I become
Once more a learner, then more worthily
My poem might rejoice in thine applause.
Oh, give me back the manuscript, which now
I feel ashamed to know within thy hand!

ALPHONSO.

Thou wilt not surely take from me to-day
What but to-day to me thou hast consigned.
Between thy poem, Tasso, and thyself,
Let me now stand as arbiter. Beware —
Nor, through assiduous diligence, impair
The genial nature that pervades thy rhymes,
And give not ear to every critic's word!
With nicest tact the poet reconciles
The judgments thousandfold of different men,
In thoughts and life at variance with each other,
And fears not numbers to displease, that he
Still greater numbers may enchant the more.

And yet I say not but that here and there
Thou mayst, with modest care, employ the file.
I promise thee at once, that in brief space,
Thou shalt receive a copy of thy poem.
Meanwhile I will retain it in my hands,
That I may first enjoy it with my sisters.
Then, if thou bring'st it back more perfect still,
Our joy will be enhanced; and here and there
We'll hint corrections, only as thy friends.

TASSO.

I can but modestly repeat my prayer:
Let me receive the copy with all speed.
My spirit resteth solely on this work,
Its full completion it must now attain.

ALPHONSO.

I praise the ardour that inspires thee, Tasso!
Yet, were it possible, thou for awhile
Shouldst rest thy mind, seek pleasure in the world,
And find some means to cool thy heated blood.
Then would thy mental powers, restored to health,
Through their sweet harmony, spontaneous yield
What now, with anxious toil, in vain thou seekest.

TASSO.

My prince, it seems so; but I am in health
When I can yield myself to strenuous toil,
And this my toil again restores my health.
Long hast thou known me; thou must long have seen,
I thrive not in luxurious indolence.
Rest brings no rest to me. Alas! I feel it:
My mind, by nature, never was ordained,

Borne on the yielding billows of the hour,
To float in pleasure o'er time's ample sea.

ALPHONSO.

Thine aims, thy dreams, all whelm thee in thyself.
Around us there doth yawn full many a gulf,
Scooped by the hand of destiny; but here,
In our own bosoms, lies the deepest; — ay!
And tempting 'tis to hurl one's self therein!
I charge thee, Tasso, snatch thee from thyself!
The man will profit, though the bard may lose.

TASSO.

To quell the impulse I should vainly strive,
Which, ceaseless in my bosom, day and night
Alternates ever. Life were life no more
Were I to cease to poetise, to dream.
Wouldst thou forbid the cunning worm to spin,
For that to nearer death he spins himself?
From his own being, he unfoldeth still
The costly texture, nor suspends his toil,
Till in his shroud he hath immured himself.
Oh, to us mortals may some gracious power
Accord the insect's enviable doom,
In some new sunny vale, with sudden joy,
To spread our eager pinions!

ALPHONSO.

List to me!
Thou givest still to others to enjoy
Life with a twofold relish. Learn thyself
To know the worth of life, whose richest boon
In tenfold measure is bestowed on thee.
Now fare thee well! The sooner thou returnest
All the more cordial will thy welcome be.

Scene III.

TASSO (*alone*).

Hold fast, my heart, thy work has been well done!
The task was arduous, for ne'er before
Didst thou or wish or venture to dissemble.
Ay, thou didst hear it, that was not his mind,
Nor his the words: to me it still appeared
As if I heard again Antonio's voice.
Only give heed! Henceforth on every side
Thou'lt hear that voice. Be firm, my heart, be firm!
'Tis only for a moment. He who learns
The trick of simulation late in life,
Doth outwardly the natural semblance wear
Of honest faith: practise, and thou'lt succeed.
(*After a pause.*)
Too soon thou triumphest, for lo! she comes!
The gentle princess comes! Oh, what a feeling!
She enters now: suspicion in my breast
And angry sullenness dissolve in grief.

Scene IV. — Princess, Tasso. (*Toward the end of the scene the others.*)

PRINCESS.

Thou thinkest to forsake us, or remainest
Rather behind in Belriguardo, Tasso,
And then thou wilt withdraw thyself from us?
I trust thine absence will not be for long.
To Rome thou goest?

TASSO.

Thither first I wend;
And if, as I have reason to expect,

I from my friends kind welcome there receive,
With care and patient toil I may, at length,
Impart its highest finish to my poem.
Full many men I find assembled there,
Masters who may be styled in every art.
Ay, and in that first city of the world,
Hath not each site, yea, every stone, a tongue?
How many thousand silent monitors,
With earnest mien, majestic, beckon us!
There if I fail to make my work complete,
I never shall complete it. Ah, I feel it —
Success doth wait on no attempt of mine!
Still altering, I ne'er shall perfect it.
I feel, yea, deeply feel, the noble art
That quickens others, and does strength infuse
Into the healthy soul, will drive me forth,
And bring me to destruction. Forth I haste!
I will to Naples first.

PRINCESS.

Darest thou venture?
Still is the rigid sentence unrepealed
Which banished thee, together with thy father.

TASSO.

I know the danger, and have pondered it.
Disguised I go, in tattered garb, perchance
Of shepherd or of pilgrim, meanly clad.
Unseen I wander through the city, where
The movements of the many shroud the one.
Then to the shore I hasten, find a bark,
With people of Sorrento, pleasant folk,
Returning home from market; for I too
Must hasten to Sorrento. There resides
My sister, ever to my parents' heart,
Together with myself, a mournful joy.

I speak not in the bark; I step ashore
Also in silence; slowly I ascend
The upward path, and at the gate inquire,
Where may she dwell, Cornelia Sersale?
With friendly mien, a woman at her wheel
Shows me the street, the house; I hasten on;
The children run beside me, and survey
The gloomy stranger with the shaggy locks.
Thus I approach the threshold. Open stands
The cottage door; I step into the house —

PRINCESS.

Oh, Tasso! if 'tis possible, look up,
And see the danger that environs thee!
I spare thy feelings, else I well might ask,
Is't noble, so to speak as now thou speakest?
Is't noble of thyself alone to think,
As if thou didst not wound the heart of friends?
My brother's sentiments, are they concealed?
And how we sisters prize and honour thee, —
Hast thou not known and felt it? Can it be,
That a few moments should have altered all?
Oh, Tasso! if thou wilt indeed depart,
Yet do not leave behind thee grief and care.

(TASSO *turns away.*)

How soothing to the sorrowing heart to give,
To the dear friend who leaves us for a season,
Some trifling present, though 'twere nothing more
Than a new mantle, or a sword perchance!
There's nought, alas! that we can offer thee,
For thou ungraciously dost fling aside
E'en what thou hast. Thou choosest for thyself
The pilgrim's scallop-shell, his sombre weeds,
His staff to lean on, and departing thus,
In willing poverty, from us thou takest
The only pleasure we could share with thee.

TASSO.

Then, thou wilt not reject me utterly?
Oh, precious words! Oh, comfort dear and sweet!
Do thou defend me! Shield me with thy care! —
Oh, send me to Consandoli, or here,
Keep me in Belriguardo, where thou wilt!
The prince is lord of many a pleasant seat,
Of many a garden, which the whole year round
Is duly kept, whose paths ye scarcely tread
A single day, perchance but for an hour.
Then, choose among them all the most remote
Which through long years ye have not visited,
And which perchance e'en now untended lies.
Oh, send me thither! There let me be yours!
And I will tend thy trees; with screen and tile
Will shield thy citrons from autumnal blasts,
Fencing them round with interwoven reeds;
Flowers of the fairest hue shall in the beds
Strike deep their spreading roots; with nicest care
Each pathway, every corner, shall be kept:
And of the palace also give me charge;
At proper times the windows I will open,
Lest noxious vapours should the pictures mar;
The walls, with choicest stucco-work adorned,
I with light feather-work will free from dust;
There shall the polished pavement brightly shine;
There shall no stone, no tiling, be misplaced;
There shall no weeds sprout from the crevices!

PRINCESS.

I find no counsel in my troubled breast.
And find no comfort for thyself and — us.
Around I look to see if some kind god
Will haply grant us succour, and reveal
Some healing plant, or potion, to restore
Peace to thy bewildered senses, peace to us!

The truest word that floweth from the lip,
The surest remedy, hath lost its power.
Leave thee I must, — yet doth my heart refuse
From thee to part.

TASSO.

Ye gods! And is it she?
She who thus pities, who thus speaks with thee?
And couldst thou e'er mistake that noble heart?
And, in her presence, was it possible,
That thee despondency could seize, could master?
No, no, 'tis thou! I am myself again!
Oh, speak once more! Sweet comfort let me hear
Again from thy dear lips! Speak, nor withdraw
Thy counsel from me. Say, what must I do,
That I may win the pardon of the prince,
That thou thyself mayst freely pardon me,
That ye may both with pleasure take me back
Into your princely service? Speak to me.

PRINCESS.

It is but little we require from thee,
And yet that little seemeth all too much.
Freely shouldst thou resign thyself to us.
We wish not from thee aught but what thou art,
If only with thyself thou wert at peace.
When joy thou feelest, thou dost cause us joy;
When thou dost fly from it, thou grievest us;
And if sometimes we are impatient with thee,
'Tis only that we fain would succour thee,
And feel, alas! our succour all in vain,
If thou the friendly hand forbear to grasp,
Stretched longingly, which yet doth reach thee not.

TASSO.

'Tis thou thyself, a holy angel still,
As when at first thou didst appear to me!

The mortal's darkened vision, oh, forgive!
If, while he gazed, he for a moment erred,
Now he again discerns thee; and his soul
Aspires to honour thee eternally.
A flood of tenderness o'erwhelms my heart—
She stands before me! She! What feeling this?
Is it distraction draws me unto thee?
Or is it madness? or a sense sublime
Which apprehends the purest, loftiest truth?
Yes: 'tis the only feeling that on earth
Hath power to make and keep me truly blest,
Or that could overwhelm me with despair,
What time I wrestled with it, and resolved
To banish it for ever from my heart.
This fiery passion I had thought to quell,
Still with mine inmost being strove and strove,
And in the strife my very self destroyed,
Which is to thee indissolubly bound.

PRINCESS.

If thou wouldst have me, Tasso, listen to thee,
Restrain this fervid glow, which frightens me.

TASSO.

Restrains the goblet's rim the bubbling wine
That sparkling foams, and overflows its bounds?
Thine every word doth elevate my bliss,
With every word more brightly gleams thine eye,
Over my spirit's depths there comes a change:
Relieved from dark perplexity, I feel
Free as a god; and all I owe to thee!
A charm unspeakable, which masters me,
Flows from thy lips. Thou makest me all thine.
Of my own being nought belongs to me.
Mine eye grows dim in happiness and light,
My senses fail; no more my foot sustains me:

Thou drawest me to thee with resistless might,
And my heart rushes self-impelled to thee.
Me hast thou won for all eternity,
Then take my whole of being to thyself.

(*He throws himself into her arms, and clasps her to his bosom.*)

PRINCESS.

(*Throwing him from her, and retiring in haste.*)

Away!

LEONORA.

(*Who has for some time appeared in the background, hastening forward.*)

What hath befallen? Tasso! Tasso!

(*She follows the* PRINCESS.)

TASSO (*about to follow her*).

O God!

ALPHONSO.

(*Who has for some time been approaching with* ANTONIO.)

He is distracted: hold him fast.

[*Exit.*

SCENE V. — TASSO, ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

If that a foeman — as thou deem'st thyself
Environed by a multitude of foes —
Beside thee stood, how would he triumph now!
Unhappy man! I am not yet myself!
When something quite unparallelled occurs,
When something monstrous first arrests our sight,

The staggered spirit stands a moment still;
For we know nothing to compare it with.

TASSO (*after a long pause*).

Fulfil thine office: I perceive 'tis thou!
Ay, thou deservest the prince's confidence.
Fulfil thine office, since my doom is sealed:
With lingering tortures, torture me to death!
Draw! draw the shaft, that I may feel the barb
That lacerates, with cruel pangs, my heart!
The tyrant's precious instrument art thou;
Be thou his jailer — executioner —
For these are offices become thee well!
(*Toward the scene.*)
Yes, tyrant, go! Thou couldst not to the last
Thy wonted mask retain; in triumph go!
Thy slave thou hast well pinioned, hast reserved
For predetermined and protracted pangs;
Yes, go! I hate thee. In my heart I feel
The horror which despotic power excites,
When it is grasping, cruel, and unjust.
(*After a pause.*)
Thus, then, at last, I see myself exiled,
Turned off, and thrust forth like a mendicant!
Thus they with garlands wreathed me, but to lead
The victim to the shrine of sacrifice!
Thus, at the very last, with cunning words,
They drew from me my only property,
My poem, — ay, and they retain it too!
Now is my one possession in your hands,
My bright credential wheresoe'er I went,
My sole resource 'gainst biting poverty!
Ay, now I see why I must take mine ease.
'Tis a conspiracy, and thou the head.
Thus that my song may not be perfected,
That my renown may ne'er be spread abroad,

That envy still a thousand faults may find,
And my unhonoured name forgotten die:
Therefore I must consent to idleness,
Therefore must spare my faculties, myself.
Oh, precious friendship! Dear solicitude!
Odious appeared the dark conspiracy
Which ceaseless round me wove its viewless web,
But still more odious does it now appear!

And thou too, Siren! who so tenderly
Didst lead me on with thy celestial mien,
Thee now I know! Wherefore, O God, so late!

But we so willingly deceive ourselves,
We honour reprobates, who honour us.
True men are never to each other known:
Such knowledge is reserved for galley-slaves,
Chained to a narrow plank, who gasp for breath,
Where none hath aught to ask, nor aught to lose,
Where for a rascal each avows himself,
And holds his neighbour for a rascal too, —
Such men as these, perchance, may know each other.
But for the rest we courteously misjudge them,
Hoping they may misjudge us in return.

How long thine hallowed image from my gaze
Veiled the coquette, working with paltry arts!
The mask has fallen! — Now I see Armida
Denuded of her charms — yes, thou art she,
Of whom my bodeful verse prophetic sang!

And then the little, cunning go-between!
With what profound contempt I view her now!
I hear the rustling of her stealthy step,
As round me still she spreads her artful toils.
Ay, now I know you! And let that suffice!

And misery, though it beggar me of all,
I honour still, — for it hath taught me truth.

ANTONIO.

I hear thee with amazement, though I know
How thy rash humour, Tasso, urges thee
To rush in haste to opposite extremes.
Collect thy spirit and command thy rage!
Thou speakest slander, dost indulge in words
Which to thine anguish though they be forgiven,
Yet thou canst ne'er forgive unto thyself.

TASSO.

Oh, speak not to me with a gentle lip:
Let me not hear one prudent word from thee!
Leave me my sullen happiness, that I
May not regain my senses, but to lose them.
My very bones are crushed, yet do I live; —
Ay! live to feel the agonising pain.
Despair infolds me in its ruthless grasp;
And, in the hell-pang that annihilates,
These slanderous words are but a feeble cry
Wrung from the depth of my sore agony.
I will away! If honest, point the path,
And suffer me at once to fly from hence.

ANTONIO.

In thine extremity I will not leave thee;
And, shouldst thou wholly lose thy self-control,
My patience shall not fail.

TASSO.

And must I, then,
Yield myself up a prisoner to thee?
Resigned I yield myself, and it is done:

I cease to struggle, and 'tis well with me. —
Now let mine anguished heart recall how fair
What, as in sport, I madly flung away.
They hence depart — O God! I there behold
The dust, ascending from their chariot-wheels —
The riders in advance — ay, there they go
E'en to the very place from whence I came!
Now they are gone — they are estranged from me.
Oh that I once again had kissed his hand!
Oh that I once again might say farewell!
Once only might I falter, Oh, forgive!
Once only hear the word, Go, thou'rt forgiven!
Alas! I hear it not: — I ne'er shall hear it —
Yes, I will go! Let me but say farewell,
Only farewell! Give me, oh, give me back
Their longed-for presence for a single moment!
Perchance I might recover! Never more!
I am rejected, doomed to banishment!
Alas! I am self-banished, never more
To hear that gentle voice, that tender glance
To meet no more —

ANTONIO.

Yet hear the voice of one
Who, not without emotion, stands beside thee!
Thou'rt not so wretched, Tasso, as thou thinkest.
Collect thyself! Too much thou art unmanned.

TASSO.

And am I, then, as wretched as I seem?
Am I as weak as I do show myself?
Say, is all lost? Has sorrow's direful stroke,
As with an earthquake's sudden shock, transformed
The stately pile into a ruined heap?
Is all the genius flown that did erewhile
So richly charm, and so exalt my soul?
Is all the power extinguished which of yore

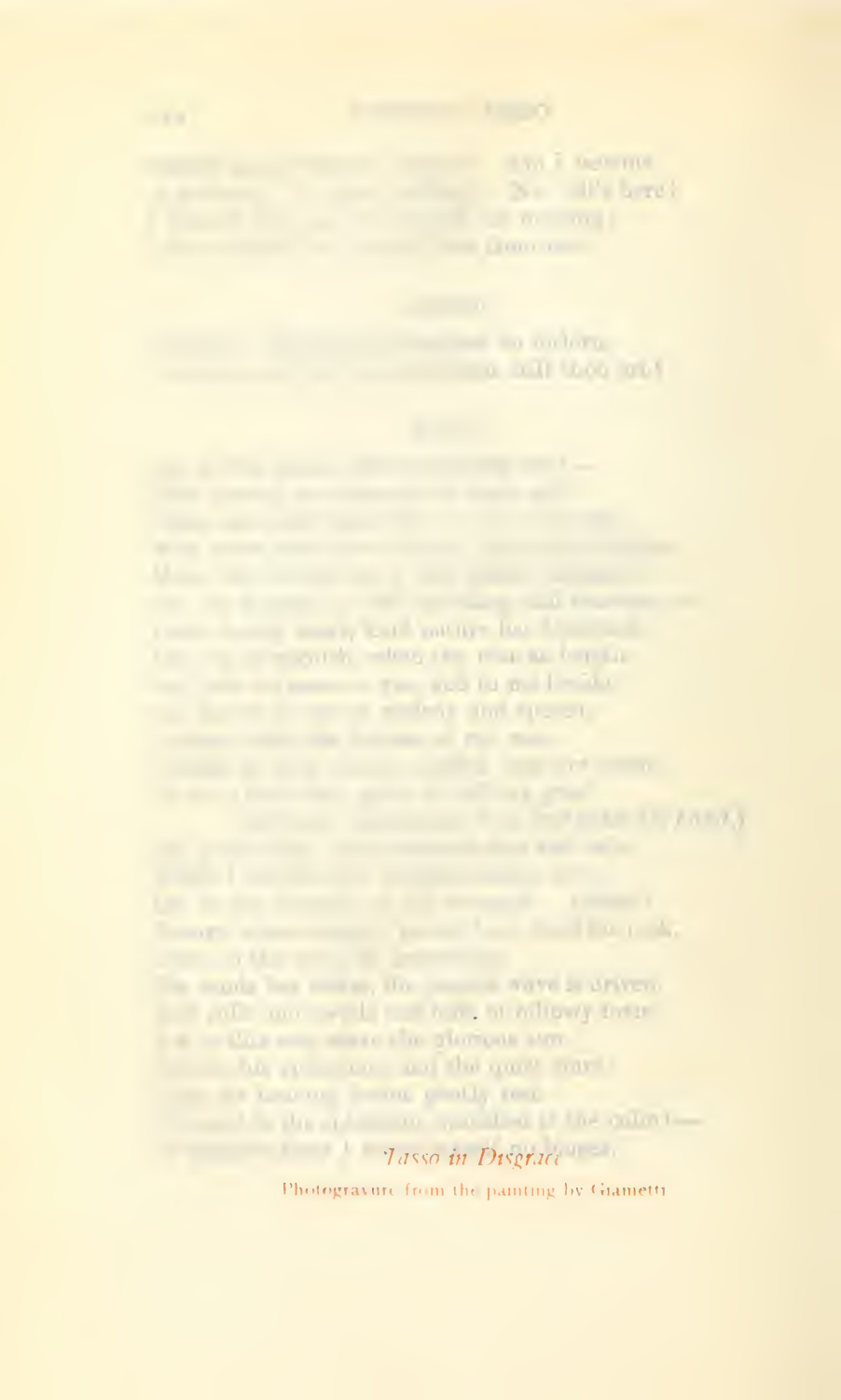
Stirred in my bosom's depths? Am I become
A nothing? A mere nothing? No: all's here!
I have it still, and yet myself am nothing!
I from myself am severed, she from me!

ANTONIO.

Though to thyself thou seemest so forlorn,
Be calm, and bear in mind what still thou art!

TASSO.

Ay, in due season thou remindest me! —
Hath history no example for mine aid?
Before me doth there rise no man of worth
Who more hath borne than I, that with his fate
Mine own comparing, I may gather strength?
No: all is gone! — but one thing still remains, —
Tears, balmy tears, kind nature has bestowed.
The cry of anguish, when the man at length
Can bear no more — yea, and to me beside,
She leaves in sorrow melody and speech,
To utter forth the fulness of my woe:
Though in their mortal anguish men are dumb,
To me a God hath given to tell my grief.
(ANTONIO *approaches him, and takes his hand.*)
Oh, noble man! thou standest firm and calm,
While I am like the tempest-driven wave.
But be not boastful of thy strength. Reflect!
Nature, whose mighty power hath fixed the rock,
Gives to the wave its instability.
She sends her storm, the passive wave is driven,
And rolls and swells and falls in billowy foam.
Yet in this very wave the glorious sun
Mirrors his splendour, and the quiet stars
Upon its heaving bosom gently rest.
Dimmed is the splendour, vanished is the calm! —
In danger's hour I know myself no longer,



Tasso in Disgrace

Photogravure from the painting by Gianetti

Nor am I now ashamed of the confession.
The helm is broken, and on every side
The reeling vessel splits. The riven planks,
Bursting asunder, yawn beneath my feet!
Thus with my outstretched arms I cling to thee!
So doth the shipwrecked mariner at last
Cling to the rock whereon his vessel struck.

Goetz von Berlichingen

With the Iron Hand

A Drama

Translated by Sir Walter Scott

This drama was written in 1771; but it was not published until 1773, during which interval it underwent considerable alterations. It was the first work which Goethe submitted to the public; and it at once excited great attention, both on account of the originality of the subject, and of the vigorous and unconventional manner in which it was worked out.

Translator's Preface

Goetz von Berlichingen, the hero of the following drama, flourished in the fifteenth century, during the reign of Maximilian the First, Emperor of Germany. Previous to this period, every German noble holding a fief immediately from the emperor, exercised on his estate a species of sovereignty subordinate to the imperial authority alone. Thus, from the princes and prelates possessed of extensive territories, down to the free knights and barons, whose domains consisted of a castle and a few acres of mountain and forest ground, each was a petty monarch upon his own property, independent of all control but the remote supremacy of the emperor.

Among the extensive rights conferred by such a constitution, that of waging war against each other, by their own private authority, was most precious to a race of proud and military barons. These private wars were called feuds, and the privilege of carrying them on was named *Faustrecht* (club-law). As the empire advanced in civilisation, the evils attending feuds became dreadfully conspicuous: each petty knight was by law entitled to make war upon his neighbours without any further ceremony than three days' previous defiance by a written form called *Fehdebrief*. Even the Golden Bull, which remedied so many evils in the Germanic body, left this dangerous privilege in full vigour. In time the residence of every free baron became a fortress, from which, as his passions or avarice dictated, sallied a band of marauders to back his quarrel, or to collect an extorted revenue from the merchants who presumed

to pass through his domain. At length whole bands of these freebooting nobles used to league together for the purpose of mutual defence against their more powerful neighbours, as likewise for that of predatory excursions against the princes, free towns, and ecclesiastic states of the empire, whose wealth tempted the needy barons to exercise against them their privilege of waging private war. These confederacies were distinguished by various titles expressive of their object: we find among them the Brotherhood of the Mace, the Knights of the Bloody Sleeve, etc. If one of the brotherhood was attacked, the rest marched without delay to his assistance; and thus, though individually weak, the petty feudatories maintained their ground against the more powerful members of the empire. Their independence and privileges were recognised and secured to them by many edicts; and though hated and occasionally oppressed by the princes and ecclesiastical authorities, to whom in return they were a scourge and a pest, they continued to maintain tenaciously the good old privilege (as they termed it) of *Faustrecht*, which they had inherited from their fathers. Amid the obvious mischiefs attending such a state of society, it must be allowed that it is frequently the means of calling into exercise the highest heroic virtues. Men daily exposed to danger, and living by the constant exertion of their courage, acquired the virtues as well as the vices of a savage state; and among many instances of cruelty and rapine, occur not a few of the most exalted valour and generosity. If the fortress of a German knight was the dread of the wealthy merchant and abbot, it was often the ready and hospitable refuge of the weary pilgrim and oppressed peasant. Although the owner subsisted by the plunder of the rich, yet he was frequently beneficent to the poor, and beloved by his own family dependents and allies. The spirit of chivalry doubtless contributed much to soften

the character of these marauding nobles. A respect for themselves taught them generosity toward their prisoners, and certain acknowledged rules prevented many of the atrocities which it might have been expected would have marked these feuds. No German noble, for example, if made captive, was confined in fetters or in a dungeon, but remained a prisoner at large upon his parole (which was called knightly ward), either in the castle of his conqueror, or in some other place assigned to him. The same species of honourable captivity was often indulged by the emperor to offenders of a noble rank, of which some instances will be found in the following pages.

Such was the state of the German nobles, when, on the 7th of August, 1495, was published the memorable edict of Maximilian for the establishment of the public peace of the empire. By this ordinance, the right of private war was totally abrogated, under the penalty of the Ban of the empire, to be enforced by the Imperial Chamber then instituted. This was at once a sentence of anathema secular and spiritual, containing the dooms of outlawry and excommunication. This ordinance was highly acceptable to the princes, bishops, and free towns, who had little to gain and much to lose in these perpetual feuds; and they combined to enforce it with no small severity against the petty feudatories: these, on the other hand, sensible that the very root of their importance consisted in their privilege of declaring private war, without which they foresaw they would not long be able to maintain their independence, struggled hard against the execution of this edict, by which their confederacies were declared unlawful, and all means taken from them of resisting their richer neighbours.

Upon the jarring interests of the princes and clergy on the one hand, and of the free knights and petty imperial feudatories on the other, arise the incidents of

the following drama. The hero, Goetz von Berlichingen, was in reality a zealous champion for the privileges of the free knights, and was repeatedly laid under the Ban of the empire for the feuds in which he was engaged, from which he was only released in consequence of high reputation for gallantry and generosity. His life was published at Nuremberg, 1731; and some account of his exploits, with a declaration of feud (*Fehdebrief*) issued by him against that city, will be found in Meusel's "Inquiry into History," vol. iv.

While the princes and free knights were thus banded against each other, the peasants and bondsmen remained in the most abject state of ignorance and oppression. This occasioned at different times the most desperate insurrections, resembling in their nature, and in the atrocities committed by the furious insurgents, the rebellions of Tyler and Cade in England, or that of the *Jacquerie* in France. Such an event occurs in the following tragedy. There is also a scene founded upon the noted institution called the Secret or Invisible Tribunal. With this extraordinary judicatory, the members and executioners of which were unknown, and met in secret to doom to death those criminals whom other courts of justice could not reach, the English reader has been made acquainted by several translations from the German, particularly the excellent romances called "Herman of Unna," and "Alf von Duilman."

The following drama was written by the elegant author of the "Sorrows of Werther," in imitation, it is said, of the manner of Shakespeare. This resemblance is not to be looked for in the style or expression, but in the outline of the characters, and mode of conducting the incidents of the piece. In Germany it is the object of enthusiastic admiration, partly owing doubtless to the force of national partiality toward a performance in which the ancient manners of the country

are faithfully and forcibly painted. Losing, however, this advantage, and under all the defects of a translation, the translator ventures to hope, that, in the following pages, there will still be found something to excite interest. Some liberties have been taken with the original, in omitting two occasional disquisitions upon the civil law as practised in Germany.[1] Literal accuracy has been less studied in the translation, than an attempt to convey the spirit and general effect of the piece. Upon the whole, it is hoped the version will be found faithful; of which the translator is less distrustful, owing to the friendship of a gentleman of high literary eminence, who has obligingly taken the trouble of superintending the publication.

WALTER SCOTT.

Edinburgh, 3d February, 1799.

[1] In the present revision these omitted portions are restored, whilst a few corrections have been made with a view to greater literalness. — ED.

Dramatis Personæ

Maximilian, Emperor of Germany.
Goetz von Berlichingen, a free knight of the empire.
Elizabeth, his wife.
Maria, his sister.
Charles, his son, — a boy.
George, his page.
Bishop of Bamberg.
Adelbert von Weislingen, a free German knight of the empire.
Adelaide von Walldorf, widow of the Count von Walldorf.
Liebtraut, a courtier of the Bishop's.
Abbot of Fulda, residing at the Bishop's court.
Olearius, a doctor of laws.
Brother Martin, a monk.
Hans von Selbitz, } Free knights, in alliance with
Franz von Sickingen, } Goetz.
Lerse, a trooper.
Francis, esquire to Weislingen.
Female attendant on Adelaide.
President, Accuser, and Avenger of the Secret Tribunal.
Metzler, }
Sievers, }
Link, } Leaders of the insurgent peasantry.
Kohl, }
Wild, }
Imperial Commissioners.
Two Merchants of Nuremberg.
Magistrates of Heilbronn.
Maximilian Stumf, a vassal of the Palsgrave.
An unknown.
Bride's father, }
Bride, } Peasants.
Bridegroom, }
Gipsy captain.
Gipsy mother and women.
Sticks and Wolf, gipsies.
Imperial captain.
Imperial officers.
Innkeeper.
Sentinel.
Sergeant-at-arms.

Imperial soldiers — Troopers belonging to Goetz, to Selbitz, to Sickingen, and to Weislingen — Peasants — Gipsies — Judges of the Secret Tribunal — Jailers — Courtiers, etc.

Goetz von Berlichingen
With the Iron Hand

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *An Inn at Schwarzenberg in Franconia.*

METZLER *and* SIEVERS, *two Swabian peasants, are seated at a table. At the fire, at some distance from them, two troopers from Bamberg. The Innkeeper.*

SIEVERS. Hänsel! Another cup of brandy — and Christian measure.

INNKEEPER. Thou art a Never-enough.

METZLER (*apart to* SIEVERS). Repeat that again about Berlichingen. — The Bambergers, there, are so angry they are almost black in the face.

SIEVERS. Bambergers! — What are they about here?

METZLER. Weislingen has been two days up yonder at the castle with the earl — they are his attendants — they came with him, I know not whence. They are waiting for him — He is going back to Bamberg.

SIEVERS. Who is that Weislingen?

METZLER. The Bishop of Bamberg's right hand! a powerful lord, who is lying in wait to play Goetz some trick.

SIEVERS. He had better take care of himself.

METZLER (*aside*). Prithee go on! (*Aloud.*) How long is it since Goetz had a new dispute with the bishop? I thought all had been agreed and squared between them.

SIEVERS. Ay! Agreement with priests! — When the bishop saw he could do no good, and always got the worst of it, he pulled in his horns, and made haste to patch up a truce — and honest Berlichingen yielded to an absurd extent, as he always does when he has the advantage.

METZLER. God bless him! a worthy nobleman.

SIEVERS. Only think! Was it not shameful? They fell upon a page of his, to his no small surprise; but they will soon be mauled for that.

METZLER. How provoking that his last stroke should have missed. He must have been plaguily annoyed.

SIEVERS. I don't think anything has vexed him so much for a long time. Look you, all had been calculated to a nicety: the time the bishop would come from the bath, with how many attendants, and which road; and, had it not been betrayed by some traitor, Goetz would have blessed his bath for him, and rubbed him dry.

FIRST TROOPER. What are you prating there about our bishop? do you want to pick a quarrel?

SIEVERS. Mind your own affairs: you have nothing to do with our table.

SECOND TROOPER. Who taught you to speak disrespectfully of our bishop?

SIEVERS. Am I bound to answer *your* questions? — Look at the fool!

[*The first* TROOPER *boxes his ears.*

METZLER. Smash the rascal!

[*They attack each other.*

SECOND TROOPER (*to* METZLER). Come on if you dare —

INNKEEPER (*separating them*). Will you be quiet? Zounds! Take yourself off if you have any scores to settle: in my house I will have order and decency. (*He pushes the* TROOPERS *out of doors.*) — And what are you about, you jackasses?

METZLER. No bad names, Hänsel! or your sconce shall pay for it. Come, comrade, we'll go and thrash those blackguards.

Enter two of BERLICHINGEN'S TROOPERS.

FIRST TROOPER. What's the matter?

SIEVERS. Ah! Good day, Peter! — Good day, Veit! — Whence come you?

SECOND TROOPER. Mind you don't let out whom we serve.

SIEVERS (*whispering*). Then, your master Goetz isn't far off?

FIRST TROOPER. Hold your tongue! — Have you had a quarrel?

SIEVERS. You must have met the fellows without — they are Bambergers.

FIRST TROOPER. What brings them here?

SIEVERS. They escort Weislingen, who is up yonder at the castle with the earl.

FIRST TROOPER. Weislingen!

SECOND TROOPER (*aside to his companion*). Peter, that is grist to our mill — How long has he been here?

METZLER. Two days; but he is off to-day, as I heard one of his fellows say.

FIRST TROOPER (*aside*). Did I not tell you he was here? — We might have waited yonder long enough — Come, Veit —

SIEVERS. Help us first to drub the Bambergers.

SECOND TROOPER. There are already two of you — We must away — Farewell! [*Exeunt both* TROOPERS.

SIEVERS. Scurvy dogs, these troopers! They won't strike a blow without pay.

METZLER. I could swear they have something in hand. — Whom do they serve?

SIEVERS. I am not to tell — They serve Goetz.

METZLER. So! — Well, now we'll cudgel those fellows outside — While I have a quarter-staff I care not for their spits.

SIEVERS. If we durst but once serve the princes in the same manner, who drag our skins over our ears!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *A Cottage in a thick Forest.*

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN *discovered walking among the trees before the door.*

GOETZ. Where linger my servants? — I must walk up and down, or sleep will overcome me — Five days and nights already on the watch — It is hardly earned, this bit of life and freedom. But when I have caught thee, Weislingen, I shall take my ease. (*Fills a glass of wine, and drinks; looks at the flask.*) — Again empty. — George! — While this and my courage last, I can laugh at the ambition and chicanery of princes! — George! — You may send round your obsequious Weislingen to your uncles and cousins to calumniate my character — Be it so — I am on the alert. — Thou hast escaped me, bishop: then thy dear Weislingen shall pay the score. — George! — Doesn't the boy hear? — George! George!

GEORGE (*entering in the cuirass of a full-grown man*). Worshipful sir.

GOETZ. What kept you? Were you asleep? — What in the Devil's name means this masquerade? — Come hither: you don't look amiss. Be not ashamed,

boy; you look bravely. Ah! if you could but fill it! — Is it Hans' cuirass?

GEORGE. He wished to sleep a little, and unbuckled it.

GOETZ. He takes things easier than his master.

GEORGE. Do not be angry! I took it quietly away and put it on, then fetched my father's old sword from the wall, ran to the meadow, and drew it —

GOETZ. And laid about you, no doubt? — Rare times for the brambles and thorns! — Is Hans asleep?

GEORGE. He started up and cried out to me when you called — I was trying to unbuckle the cuirass when I heard you twice or thrice.

GOETZ. Go take back his cuirass, and tell him to be ready with his horses.

GEORGE. I have fed them well, and they are ready bridled: you may mount when you will.

GOETZ. Bring me a stoup of wine. Give Hans a glass too, and tell him to be on the alert — there is good cause: I expect the return of my scouts every moment.

GEORGE. Ah! noble sir!

GOETZ. What's the matter?

GEORGE. May I not go with you?

GOETZ. Another time, George — when we waylay merchants and seize their wagons —

GEORGE. Another time! — You have said that so often. — Oh, this time, this time! I will only skulk behind; just keep on the lookout — I will gather up all the spent arrows for you.

GOETZ. Next time, George! — You must first have a doublet, a steel cap, and a lance.

GEORGE. Take me with you now! — Had I been with you last time, you would not have lost your crossbow.

GOETZ. Do you know about that?

GEORGE. You threw it at your antagonist's head: one of his followers picked it up, and off with it he went. Don't I know about it?

GOETZ. Did my people tell you?

GEORGE. Oh, yes! and for that, I whistle them all sorts of tunes while we dress the horses, and teach them merry songs too.

GOETZ. Thou art a brave boy.

GEORGE. Take me with you to prove myself so.

GOETZ. The next time, I promise you! You must not go to battle unarmed as you are. There is a time coming which will also require men. I tell thee, boy, it will be a dear time. Princes shall offer their treasures for a man whom they now hate. Go, George, give Hans his cuirass again, and bring me wine. (*Exit* GEORGE.) Where can my people be? It is incomprehensible! — A monk! What brings him here so late?

Enter Brother MARTIN.

GOETZ. Good evening, reverend father! Whence come you so late? Man of holy rest, thou shamest many knights.

MARTIN. Thanks, noble sir! I am at present but an unworthy brother, if we come to titles. My cloister name is Augustin; but I like better to be called by my Christian name, Martin.

GOETZ. You are tired, Brother Martin, and doubtless thirsty.

Enter GEORGE *with wine.*

GOETZ. Here, in good time, comes wine.

MARTIN. For me a draught of water. I dare not drink wine.

GOETZ. Is it against your vow?

MARTIN. Noble sir, to *drink* wine is not against my vow; but because *wine* is against my vow, therefore I drink it not.

GOETZ. How am I to understand that?

MARTIN. 'Tis well for thee that thou dost not understand it. Eating and drinking nourish man's life.

GOETZ. Well!

MARTIN. When thou hast eaten and drunken, thou art, as it were, new born, stronger, bolder, fitter for action. Wine rejoices the heart of man, and joyousness is the mother of every virtue. When thou hast drunk wine, thou art double what thou shouldst be! twice as ingenious, twice as enterprising, and twice as active.

GOETZ. As I drink it, what you say is true.

MARTIN. 'Tis when thus taken in moderation that I speak of it. But we — [GEORGE *brings water.*

GOETZ (*aside to* GEORGE). Go to the road which leads to Daxbach: lay thine ear close to the earth, and listen for the tread of horses. Return immediately.

MARTIN. But we, on the other hand, when we have eaten and drunken, are the reverse of what we should be. Our sluggish digestion depresses our mental powers; and, in the indulgence of luxurious ease, desires are generated which grow too strong for our weakness.

GOETZ. One glass, Brother Martin, will not disturb your sleep. You have travelled far to-day. (*Raises his glass.*) Here's to all fighting-men!

MARTIN. With all my heart. (*They ring their glasses.*) I cannot abide idle people — yet will I not say that all monks are idle; they do what they can: I am just come from St. Bede, where I slept last night. The prior took me into the garden: that is their hive. Excellent salad, cabbages in perfection, and such cauliflowers and artichokes as you will hardly find in Europe.

GOETZ. So that is not the life for you?

[*Goes out, and looks anxiously after the boy. Returns.*

MARTIN. Would that God had made me a gardener

or day-labourer! I might then have been happy! My convent is Erfurt in Saxony: my abbot loves me; he knows I cannot remain idle; and so he sends me round the country, wherever there is business to be done. I am on my way to the Bishop of Constance.

GOETZ. Another glass. Good speed to you!

MARTIN. The same to you.

GOETZ. Why do you look at me so steadfastly, brother?

MARTIN. I am in love with your armour.

GOETZ. Would you like a suit? It is heavy and toilsome to the wearer.

MARTIN. What is not toilsome in this world? — But to me nothing is so much so as to renounce my very nature! Poverty, chastity, obedience, — three vows, each of which taken singly seems the most dreadful to humanity — so insupportable are they all; — and to spend a lifetime under this burden, or to groan despairingly under the still heavier load of an evil conscience — Ah! Sir Knight, what are the toils of your life compared to the sorrows of a state, which, from a mistaken desire of drawing nearer to the Deity, condemns as crimes the best impulses of our nature, — impulses by which we live, grow, and prosper!

GOETZ. Were your vow less sacred, I would give you a suit of armour and a steed, and we would ride out together.

MARTIN. Would to Heaven my shoulders had strength to bear armour, and my arm to unhorse an enemy! Poor, weak hand, accustomed from infancy to swing censers, to bear crosses and banners of peace, how couldst thou manage the lance and falchion? My voice, tuned only to Aves and Hallelujahs, would be a herald of my weakness to the enemy; while yours would overpower him: otherwise no vows should keep me from entering an order founded by the Creator himself.

GOETZ. To your happy return! [*Drinks.*

MARTIN. I drink that only in compliment to you! A return to my prison must ever be unhappy. When you, Sir Knight, return to your castle, with the consciousness of your courage and strength, which no fatigue can overcome; when you, for the first time, after a long absence, stretch yourself unarmed upon your bed, secure from the attack of enemies, and resign yourself to a sleep sweeter than the draught after a long thirst, — then can you speak of happiness.

GOETZ. And accordingly it comes but seldom!

MARTIN (*with growing ardour*). But, when it does come, it is a foretaste of paradise. When you return home laden with the spoils of your enemies, and remember, "Such a one I struck from his horse ere he could discharge his piece — such another I overthrew, horse and man," then you ride to your castle, and —

GOETZ. And what?

MARTIN. And your wife — (*Fills a glass.*) To her health! (*He wipes his eyes.*) You have one?

GOETZ. A virtuous, noble wife!

MARTIN. Happy the man who possesses a virtuous wife: his life is doubled. This blessing was denied me, yet was woman the glory or crown of creation.

GOETZ (*aside*). I grieve for him. The sense of his condition preys upon his heart.

Enter GEORGE, *breathless.*

GEORGE. My lord, my lord, I hear horses in full gallop! — two of them — 'Tis they for certain.

GOETZ. Bring out my steed: let Hans mount. Farewell, dear brother, God be with you. Be cheerful and patient. He will give you ample scope.

MARTIN. Let me request your name.

GOETZ. Pardon me — Farewell!

[*Gives his left hand.*

MARTIN. Why do you give the left? — Am I unworthy of the knightly right hand?

GOETZ. Were you the emperor, you must be satisfied with this. My right hand, though not useless in combat, is unresponsive to the grasp of affection. It is one with its mailed gauntlet — You see, it is *iron!*

MARTIN. Then art thou Goetz of Berlichingen. I thank thee, Heaven, who hast shown me the man whom princes hate, but to whom the oppressed throng! (*He takes his right hand.*) Withdraw not this hand: let me kiss it.

GOETZ. You must not!

MARTIN. Let me, let me — Thou hand, more worthy even than the saintly relic through which the most sacred blood has flowed! lifeless instrument, quickened by the noblest spirit's faith in God.

[GOETZ *adjusts his helmet, and takes his lance.*

MARTIN. There was a monk among us about a year ago, who visited you when your hand was shot off at the siege of Landshut. He used to tell us what you suffered, and your grief at being disabled for your profession of arms, till you remembered having heard one who had also lost a hand, and yet served long as a gallant knight — I shall never forget it.

Enter the two TROOPERS. *They speak apart with* GOETZ.

MARTIN (*continuing*). I shall never forget his words, uttered in the noblest, the most childlike, trust in God: "If I had twelve hands, what would they avail me without thy grace? then may I with only one — "

GOETZ. In the wood of Haslach, then. (*Turns to* MARTIN.) Farewell, worthy brother! [*Embraces him.*

MARTIN. Forget me not, as I never shall forget thee! [*Exeunt* GOETZ *and his* TROOPERS.

MARTIN. How my heart beat at the sight of him! He spoke not, yet my spirit recognised his. What rapture to behold a great man!

GEORGE. Reverend sir, you will sleep here?

MARTIN. Can I have a bed?

GEORGE. No, sir! I know of beds only by hearsay: in our quarters there is nothing but straw.

MARTIN. It will serve. What is thy name?

GEORGE. George, reverend sir.

MARTIN. George! Thou hast a gallant patron saint.

GEORGE. They say he was a trooper: that is what I intend to be.

MARTIN. Stop. (*Takes a picture from his breviary, and gives it to him.*) There behold him — follow his example; be brave, and fear God.

[*Exit into the cottage.*

GEORGE. Ah! what a splendid gray horse! If I had but one like that — and the golden armour. There is an ugly dragon. At present I shoot nothing but sparrows. O St. George! make me but tall and strong; give me a lance, armour, and such a horse, and then let the dragons come! [*Exit.*

SCENE III. — *An Apartment in Jaxthausen, the Castle of Goetz von Berlichingen.*

ELIZABETH, MARIA, *and* CHARLES *discovered.*

CHARLES. Pray, now, dear aunt, tell me again that story about the good child: it is so pretty —

MARIA. Do you tell it to me, little rogue! that I may see if you have paid attention.

CHARLES. Wait, then, till I think. — "There was once upon" — Yes — "There was once upon a time a child, and his mother was sick: so the child went —"

MARIA. No, no! — "Then his mother said, 'Dear child —'"

CHARLES. "'I am sick —'"

MARIA. "'And cannot go out —'"

CHARLES. "And gave him money, and said, 'Go and buy yourself a breakfast.' There came a poor man —"

MARIA. "The child went. There met him an old man who was" — Now, Charles!

CHARLES. "Who was — old —"

MARIA. Of course. "Who was hardly able to walk, and said, 'Dear child —'"

CHARLES. "'Give me something: I have eaten not a morsel yesterday or to-day.' Then the child gave him the money —"

MARIA. "That should have bought his breakfast —"

CHARLES. "Then the old man said —"

MARIA. "Then the old man took the child by the hand —"

CHARLES. "By the hand, and said — and became a fine beautiful saint — and said — 'Dear child —'"

MARIA. "'The Holy Virgin rewards thee for thy benevolence through me; whatever sick person thou touchest —'"

CHARLES. "'With thy hand'" — It was the right hand, I think.

MARIA. Yes.

CHARLES. "'He will get well directly —'"

MARIA. "Then the child ran home, and could not speak for joy —"

CHARLES. "And fell upon his mother's neck, and wept for joy —"

MARIA. "Then the mother cried, 'What is this?' and became" — Now, Charles.

CHARLES. "Became — became —"

MARIA. You do not attend — "and became well. And the child cured kings and emperors, and became so rich that he built a great abbey."

ELIZABETH. I cannot understand why my husband stays. He has been away five days and nights, and he hoped to have finished his adventure so quickly.

MARIA. I have long felt uneasy. Were I married to a man who continually incurred such danger, I should die within the first year.

ELIZABETH. I thank God that he has made me of firmer stuff!

CHARLES. But must my father ride out if it is so dangerous?

MARIA. Such is his good pleasure.

ELIZABETH. He must, indeed, dear Charles!

CHARLES. Why?

ELIZABETH. Do you not remember the last time he rode out, when he brought you those nice things?

CHARLES. Will he bring me anything now?

ELIZABETH. I believe so. Listen: there was a tailor at Stutgard who was a capital archer, and had gained the prize at Cologne.

CHARLES. Was it much?

ELIZABETH. A hundred dollars; and afterward they would not pay him.

MARIA. That was naughty, eh, Charles?

CHARLES. Naughty people!

ELIZABETH. The tailor came to your father, and begged him to get his money for him: then your father rode out, and intercepted a party of merchants from Cologne, and kept them prisoners till they paid the money. Would not you have ridden out too?

CHARLES. No; for one must go through a dark, thick wood, where there are gipsies and witches —

ELIZABETH. You're a fine fellow; afraid of witches!

MARIA. Charles, it is far better to live at home in your castle, like a quiet Christian knight. One may find opportunities enough of doing good on one's own lands. Even the worthiest knights do more harm than good in their excursions.

ELIZABETH. Sister, you know not what you are saying. — God grant our boy may become braver as he grows up, and not take after that Weislingen, who has dealt so faithlessly with my husband.

MARIA. We will not judge, Elizabeth. My brother is highly incensed, and so are you: I am only a spectator in the matter, and can be more impartial.

ELIZABETH. Weislingen cannot be defended.

MARIA. What I have heard of him has interested me. — Even your husband relates many instances of his former goodness and affection. — How happy was their youth when they were both pages of honour to the margrave!

ELIZABETH. That may be. But only tell me, how can a man ever have been good who lays snares for his best and truest friend? who has sold his services to the enemies of my husband; and who strives, by invidious misrepresentations, to poison the mind of our noble emperor, who is so gracious to us?

[*A horn is heard.*

CHARLES. Papa! papa! the warder sounds his horn! Joy! joy! Open the gate!

ELIZABETH. There he comes with booty!

Enter PETER.

PETER. We have fought — we have conquered! God save you, noble ladies!

ELIZABETH. Have you captured Weislingen?

PETER. Himself and three followers.

ELIZABETH. How came you to stay so long?

PETER. We lay in wait for him between Nuremberg and Bamberg; but he would not come, though we knew he had set out. At length we heard of his whereabouts: he had struck off sideways, and was staying quietly with the earl at Schwarzenberg.

ELIZABETH. They would also fain make the earl my husband's enemy.

PETER. I immediately told my master. — Up and away we rode into the forest of Haslach. And it was curious, that, while we were riding along that night, a shepherd was watching; and five wolves fell upon the flock, and attacked them stoutly. Then my master laughed and said, "Good luck to us all, dear comrades, both to you and us!" And the good omen overjoyed us. Just then Weislingen came riding toward us with four attendants —

MARIA. How my heart beats!

PETER. My comrade and I, as our master had commanded, threw ourselves suddenly on him, and clung to him as if we had grown together, so that he could not move; while my master and Hans fell upon the servants, and overpowered them. They were all taken, except one who escaped.

ELIZABETH. I am curious to see him. Will he arrive soon?

PETER. They are riding through the valley, and will be here in a quarter of an hour.

MARIA. He is, no doubt, cast down and dejected?

PETER. He looks gloomy enough.

MARIA. It will grieve me to see his distress!

ELIZABETH. Oh! I must get food ready. You are, no doubt, all hungry?

PETER. Hungry enough, in truth.

ELIZABETH (*to Maria*). Take the cellar-keys, and bring the best wine. They have deserved it.

[*Exit* ELIZABETH.

CHARLES. I'll go too, aunt.

MARIA. Come, then, boy.

[*Exeunt* CHARLES *and* MARIA.

PETER. He'll never be his father, else he would have gone with me to the stable.

Enter GOETZ, WEISLINGEN, HANS, *and other* TROOPERS.

GOETZ (*laying his helmet and sword on a table*) Unbuckle my armour, and give me my doublet. Ease will refresh me. Brother Martin, thou saidst truly. You have kept us long on the watch, Weislingen!

[WEISLINGEN *paces up and down in silence.*

GOETZ. Be of good cheer. Come, unarm yourself! Where are your clothes? I hope nothing has been lost. (*To the attendants.*) Go, ask his servants; open the baggage, and see that nothing is missing. Or I can lend you some of mine.

WEISLINGEN. Let me remain as I am — it is all one.

GOETZ. I can give you a handsome doublet, but it is only of linen: it has grown too tight for me. I wore it at the marriage of my lord the palsgrave, when your bishop was so incensed at me. About a fortnight before I had sunk two of his vessels upon the Main — I was going up-stairs in the Stag at Heidelberg, with Franz von Sickingen. Before you get quite to the top, there is a landing-place with iron rails — there stood the bishop, and gave his hand to Franz as he passed, and to me also as I followed close behind him. I laughed in my sleeve, and went to the Landgrave of Hanau, who was always a kind friend to me, and said, "The bishop has given me his hand, but I'll wager he did not know me." The bishop heard me, for I was speaking loud on purpose. He came to us angrily, and said, "True, I gave thee my hand, because I knew thee not." To which I answered, "I know that, my lord; and so here you have your shake of the hand back again!" The manikin grew red as a turkey-cock with spite; and he ran up into the room, and complained to the Palsgrave Lewis and the Prince of Nassau. We have laughed over the scene again and again.

WEISLINGEN. I wish you would leave me to myself.

GOETZ. Why so? I entreat you be of good cheer. You are my prisoner, but I will not abuse my power.

WEISLINGEN. I have no fear of that. That is your duty as a knight.

GOETZ. And you know how sacred it is to me.

WEISLINGEN. I am your prisoner — the rest matters not.

GOETZ. You should not say so. Had you been taken by a prince, fettered, and cast into a dungeon, your jailer directed to drive sleep from your eyes —

Enter SERVANTS *with clothes.* WEISLINGEN *unarms himself. Enter* CHARLES.

CHARLES. Good morrow, papa!

GOETZ (*kisses him*). Good morrow, boy! How have you been this long time?

CHARLES. Very well, father! Aunt says I am a good boy.

GOETZ. Does she?

CHARLES. Have you brought me anything?

GOETZ. Nothing this time.

CHARLES. I have learned a great deal.

GOETZ. Ay!

CHARLES. Shall I tell you about the good child?

GOETZ. After dinner.

CHARLES. I know something else too.

GOETZ. What may that be?

CHARLES. "Jaxthausen is a village and castle on the Jaxt, which has appertained in property and heritage for two hundred years to the lords of Berlichingen — "

GOETZ. Do you know the Lord of Berlichingen? (CHARLES *stares at him. Aside.*) His learning is so abstruse that he does not know his own father! To whom does Jaxthausen belong?

CHARLES. "Jaxthausen is a village and castle upon the Jaxt — "

GOETZ. I did not ask that. I knew every path, pass, and ford about the place before ever I knew the

name of the village, castle, or river. — Is your mother in the kitchen?

CHARLES. Yes, papa. They are cooking a lamb and turnips.

GOETZ. Do you know that too, Jack Turnspit?

CHARLES. And my aunt is roasting an apple for me to eat after dinner —

GOETZ. Can't you eat it raw?

CHARLES. It tastes better roasted.

GOETZ. You must have a tidbit, must you? — Weislingen, I will be with you immediately. I must go and see my wife. — Come, Charles!

CHARLES. Who is that man?

GOETZ. Bid him welcome. Tell him to be merry.

CHARLES. There's my hand for you, man! Be merry — for dinner will soon be ready.

WEISLINGEN (*takes up the child and kisses him*). Happy boy! that knowest no worse evil than the delay of dinner. May you live to have much joy in your son, Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Where there is most light the shades are deepest. Yet I should thank God for it. We'll see what they are about.

[*Exit with* CHARLES *and* SERVANTS.

WEISLINGEN. Oh, that I could but wake and find this all a dream! In the power of Berlichingen! — from whom I had scarcely detached myself — whose remembrance I shunned like fire — whom I hoped to overpower! and he still the old true-hearted Goetz! Gracious God! what will be the end of it? Oh, Adelbert! Led back to the very hall where we played as children; when thou didst love and prize him as thy soul! Who can know him and hate him? Alas! I am so thoroughly insignificant here. Happy days! ye are gone. There, in his chair by the chimney, sat old Berlichingen, while we played around him, and loved each other like cherubs! How anxious the bishop

and all my friends will be! Well, the whole country will sympathise with my misfortune. But what avails it? Can they give me the peace after which I strive?

Reënter GOETZ *with wine and goblets.*

GOETZ. We'll take a glass while dinner is preparing. Come, sit down — think yourself at home! Fancy you've once more come to see Goetz. It is long since we have sat and emptied a flagon together. (*Lifts his glass.*) Come: a light heart!

WEISLINGEN. Those times are gone by.

GOETZ. God forbid! To be sure, we shall hardly pass more pleasant days than those we spent together at the margrave's court, when we were inseparable night and day. I think with pleasure on my youth. Do you remember the scuffle I had with the Polander, whose pomaded and frizzled hair I chanced to rub with my sleeve?

WEISLINGEN. It was at table; and he struck at you with a knife.

GOETZ. I gave it him, however; and you had a quarrel upon that account with his comrades. We always stuck together like brave fellows, and were the admiration of every one. (*Raises his glass.*) Castor and Pollux! It used to rejoice my heart when the margrave so called us.

WEISLINGEN. The Bishop of Wurtzburg first gave us the name.

GOETZ. That bishop was a learned man, and withal so kind and gentle. I shall remember as long as I live how he used to caress us, praise our friendship, and say, "Happy is the man who is his friend's twin brother."

WEISLINGEN. No more of that.

GOETZ. Why not? I know nothing more delightful after fatigue than to talk over old times. Indeed, when I recall to mind how we bore good and bad for-

tune together, and were all in all to each other, and how I thought this was to continue for ever! Was not that my sole comfort when my hand was shot away at Landshut, and you nursed and tended me like a brother? I hoped Adelbert would in future be my right hand. And now —

WEISLINGEN. Alas!

GOETZ. Hadst thou but listened to me when I begged thee to go with me to Brabant, all would have been well. But then that unhappy turn for court-dangling seized thee, and thy coquetting and flirting with the women. I always told thee, when thou wouldst mix with these lounging, vain court sycophants, and entertain them with gossip about unlucky matches and seduced girls, scandal about absent friends, and all such trash as they take interest in, — I always said, Adelbert, thou wilt become a rogue!

WEISLINGEN. To what purpose is all this?

GOETZ. Would to God I could forget it, or that it were otherwise! Art not thou free and nobly born as any in Germany; independent, subject to the emperor alone; and dost crouch among vassals? What is the bishop to thee? Granted, he is thy neighbour, and can do thee a shrewd turn; hast thou not power and friends to requite him in kind? Art thou ignorant of the dignity of a free knight, who depends only upon God, the emperor, and himself, that thou degradest thyself to be the courtier of a stubborn, jealous priest?

WEISLINGEN. Let me speak!

GOETZ. What hast thou to say?

WEISLINGEN. You look upon the princes as the wolf upon the shepherd. And can you blame them for defending their territories and property? Are they a moment secure from the unruly knights, who plunder their vassals even upon the highroads, and sack their castles and villages? Upon the other hand, our country's enemies threaten to overrun the lands of our

beloved emperor; yet, while he needs the princes' assistance, they can scarce defend their own lives: is it not our good genius which at this moment leads them to devise means of procuring peace for Germany, of securing the administration of justice, and giving to great and small the blessings of quiet? And can you blame us, Berlichingen, for securing the protection of the powerful princes, our neighbours, whose assistance is at hand, rather than relying on that of the emperor, who is so far removed from us, and is hardly able to protect himself?

GOETZ. Yes, yes, I understand you. Weislingen, were the princes as you paint them, we should all have what we want. Peace and quiet! No doubt! Every bird of prey naturally likes to eat its plunder undisturbed. The general weal! If they would but take the trouble to study that. And they trifle with the emperor shamefully. Every day some new tinker or other comes to give his opinion. The emperor means well, and would gladly put things to rights; but because he happens to understand a thing readily, and, by a single word, can put a thousand hands into motion, he thinks everything will be as speedily and as easily accomplished. Ordinance upon ordinance is promulgated, each nullifying the last; while the princes obey only those which serve their own interest, and prate of peace and security of the empire, while they are treading under foot their weaker neighbours. I will be sworn, many a one thanks God in his heart that the Turk keeps the emperor fully employed!

WEISLINGEN. You view things your own way.

GOETZ. So does every one. The question is, which is the right way to view them? And your plans at least shun the day.

WEISLINGEN. You may say what you will: I am your prisoner.

GOETZ. If your conscience is free, so are you. How was it with the general tranquillity? I remember going, as a boy of sixteen, with the margrave to the Imperial Diet. What harangues the princes made! And the clergy were the most vociferous of all. Your bishop thundered into the emperor's ears his regard for justice, till one thought it had become part and parcel of his being. And now he has imprisoned a page of mine, at a time when our quarrels were all accommodated, and I had buried them in oblivion. Is not all settled between us? What does he want with the boy?

WEISLINGEN. It was done without his knowledge.

GOETZ. Then, why does he not release him?

WEISLINGEN. He did not conduct himself as he ought.

GOETZ. Not conduct himself as he ought! By my honour he performed his duty, as surely as he has been imprisoned both with your knowledge and the bishop's! Do you think I am come into the world this very day, that I cannot see what all this means?

WEISLINGEN. You are suspicious, and do us wrong.

GOETZ. Weislingen, shall I deal openly with you? Inconsiderable as I am, I am a thorn in your side, and Selbitz and Sickingen are no less so, because we are firmly resolved to die sooner than to thank any one but God for the air we breathe, or pay homage to any one but the emperor. This is why they worry me in every possible way, blacken my character with the emperor, and among my friends and neighbours, and spy about for advantage over me. They would have me out of the way at any price; that was your reason for imprisoning the page whom you knew I had despatched for intelligence: and now you say he did not conduct himself as he should do, because he would not betray my secrets. And you, Weislingen, are their tool!

WEISLINGEN. Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Not a word more. I am an enemy to long explanations: they deceive either the maker or the hearer, and generally both.

Enter CHARLES.

CHARLES. Dinner is ready, father!

GOETZ. Good news! Come, I hope the company of my women folk will amuse you. You always liked the girls. Ay, ay, they can tell many pretty stories about you. Come! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *The Bishop of Bamberg's Palace.*

The BISHOP, *the* ABBOT OF FULDA, OLEARIUS, LIEBTRAUT, *and* COURTIERS *at table. The dessert and wine before them.*

BISHOP. Are there many of the German nobility studying at Bologna?

OLEARIUS. Both nobles and citizens; and I do not exaggerate in saying that they acquire the most brilliant reputation. It is a proverb in the university, — "As studious as a German noble." For while the citizens display a laudable diligence, in order to compensate by learning for their want of birth, the nobles strive, with praiseworthy emulation, to enhance their ancestral dignity by superior attainments.

ABBOT. Indeed!

LIEBTRAUT. What may one not live to hear! We live and learn, as the proverb says. "As studious as a German noble." I never heard that before.

OLEARIUS. Yes: they are the admiration of the whole university. Some of the oldest and most learned will soon be coming back with their doctor's degree. The emperor will doubtless be happy to entrust to them the highest offices.

BISHOP. He cannot fail to do so.

ABBOT. Do you know, for instance, a young man — a Hessian? —

OLEARIUS. There are many Hessians with us.

ABBOT. His name is — is — Does nobody remember it? His mother was a Von — Oh! his father had but one eye, and was a marshal —

LIEBTRAUT. Von Wildenholz!

ABBOT. Right. Von Wildenholz.

OLEARIUS. I know him well. A young man of great abilities. He is particularly esteemed for his talent in disputation.

ABBOT. He has that from his mother.

LIEBTRAUT. Yes; but his father would never praise her for that quality.

BISHOP. How call you the emperor who wrote your "Corpus Juris?"

OLEARIUS. Justinian.

BISHOP. A worthy prince: — here's to his memory!

OLEARIUS. To his memory! [*They drink.*

ABBOT. That must be a fine book.

OLEARIUS. It may be called a book of books; a digest of all laws; there you find the sentence ready for every case; and, where the text is antiquated or obscure, the deficiency is supplied by notes, with which the most learned men have enriched this truly admirable work.

ABBOT. A digest of all laws! — Indeed! — Then the Ten Commandments must be in it.

OLEARIUS. Implicité; not explicité.

ABBOT. That's what I mean: plainly set down, without any explication.

BISHOP. But the best is, you tell us that a state can be maintained in the most perfect tranquillity and subordination by receiving and rightly following that statute-book.

OLEARIUS. Doubtless.

BISHOP. All doctors of laws! [*They drink.*

OLEARIUS. I'll tell them of this abroad. (*They drink.*) Would to heaven that men thought thus in my country.

ABBOT. Whence come you, most learned sir?

OLEARIUS. From Frankfort, at your Eminence's service!

BISHOP. You gentlemen of the law, then, are not held in high estimation there? — How comes that?

OLEARIUS. It is strange enough — when I last went there to collect my father's effects, the mob almost stoned me when they heard I was a lawyer.

ABBOT. God bless me!

OLEARIUS. It is because their tribunal, which they hold in great respect, is composed of people totally ignorant of the Roman law. An intimate acquaintance with the internal condition of the town, and also of its foreign relations, acquired through age and experience, is deemed a sufficient qualification. They decide according to certain established edicts of their own, and some old customs recognised in the city and neighbourhood.

ABBOT. That's very right.

OLEARIUS. But far from sufficient. The life of man is short, and in one generation cases of every description cannot occur: our statute-book is a collection of precedents, furnished by the experience of many centuries. Besides, the wills and opinions of men are variable: one man deems right to-day, what another disapproves to-morrow; and confusion and injustice are the inevitable results. Law determines absolutely, and its decrees are immutable.

ABBOT. That's certainly better.

OLEARIUS. But the common people won't acknowledge that; and, eager as they are after novelty, they hate any innovation in their laws which leads them out of the beaten track, be it ever so much for the

better. They hate a jurist as if he were a cutpurse or a subverter of the state, and become furious if one attempts to settle among them.

LIEBTRAUT. You come from Frankfort? — I know the place well — we tasted your good cheer at the emperor's coronation. You say your name is Olearius — I know no one in the town of your name.

OLEARIUS. My father's name was Oilman — But, after the example and with the advice of many jurists, I have Latinised the name to Olearius, for the decoration of the title-page of my legal treatises.

LIEBTRAUT. You did well to translate yourself: a prophet is not honoured in his own country — in your native guise you might have shared the same fate.

OLEARIUS. That was not the reason.

LIEBTRAUT. All things have two reasons.

ABBOT. A prophet is not honoured in his own country.

LIEBTRAUT. But do you know why, most reverend sir?

ABBOT. Because he was born and bred there.

LIEBTRAUT. Well, that may be one reason. The other is, because, upon a nearer acquaintance with these gentlemen, the halo of glory and honour shed around them by the distant haze totally disappears: they are then seen to be nothing more than tiny rushlights!

OLEARIUS. It seems you are placed here to tell pleasant truths.

LIEBTRAUT. As I have wit enough to discover them, I do not lack courage to utter them.

OLEARIUS. Yet you lack the art of applying them well.

LIEBTRAUT. It is no matter where you place a cupping-glass, provided it draws blood.

OLEARIUS. Barbers are known by their dress, and no one takes offence at their scurvy jests. Let me

advise you, as a precaution, to bear the badge of your order, — a cap and bells!

LIEBTRAUT. Where did you take your degree? I only ask, so that, should I ever take a fancy to a fool's cap, I could at once go to the right shop.

OLEARIUS. You carry face enough.

LIEBTRAUT. And you paunch.

[*The* BISHOP *and* ABBOT *laugh.*

BISHOP. Not so warm, gentlemen! — Some other subject. At table all should be fair and quiet. Choose another subject, Liebtraut.

LIEBTRAUT. Opposite Frankfort lies a village called Sachsenhausen —

OLEARIUS (*to the* BISHOP). What news of the Turkish expedition, your Excellency?

BISHOP. The emperor has most at heart, first of all to restore peace to the empire, put an end to feuds, and secure the strict administration of justice: then, according to report, he will go in person against the enemies of his country and of Christendom. At present internal dissensions give him enough to do; and the empire, despite half a hundred treaties of peace, is one scene of murder. Franconia, Swabia, the Upper Rhine, and the surrounding countries are laid waste by presumptuous and reckless nights. — And here, at Bamberg, Sickingen, Selbitz with one leg, and Goetz with the iron hand, scoff at the imperial authority.

ABBOT. If his Majesty does not exert himself, these fellows will at last thrust us into sacks.

LIEBTRAUT. He would be a sturdy fellow indeed who should thrust the wine-butt of Fulda into a sack!

BISHOP. Goetz especially has been for many years my mortal foe, and annoys me beyond description. But it will not last long, I hope. The emperor holds his court at Augsburg. We have taken our measures, and cannot fail of success. — Doctor, do you know Adelbert von Weislingen?

OLEARIUS. No, your Eminence.

BISHOP. If you stay till his arrival, you will have the pleasure of seeing a most noble, accomplished, and gallant knight.

OLEARIUS. He must be an excellent man indeed to deserve such praises from such a mouth.

LIEBTRAUT. And yet he was not bred at any university.

BISHOP. We know that. (*The attendants throng to the window.*) What's the matter?

ATTENDANT. Färber, Weislingen's servant, is riding in at the castle-gate.

BISHOP. See what he brings. He most likely comes to announce his master.

[*Exit* LIEBTRAUT. *They stand up and drink.*

LIEBTRAUT *reënters.*

BISHOP. What news?

LIEBTRAUT. I wish another had to tell it — Weislingen is a prisoner.

BISHOP. What?

LIEBTRAUT. Berlichingen has seized him and three troopers near Haslach — One is escaped to tell you.

ABBOT. A Job's messenger!

OLEARIUS. I grieve from my heart.

BISHOP. I will see the servant: bring him up — I will speak with him myself. Conduct him into my cabinet. [*Exit* BISHOP.

ABBOT (*sitting down*). Another draught, however.

[*The* SERVANTS *fill round.*

OLEARIUS. Will not your Reverence take a turn in the garden? "Post cœnam stabis, seu passus mille meabis."

LIEBTRAUT. In truth, sitting is unhealthy for you. You might get an apoplexy. (*The* ABBOT *rises. Aside.*) Let me but once get him out of doors, I will give him exercise enough! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. — *Jaxthausen.*

MARIA, WEISLINGEN.

MARIA. You love me, you say. I willingly believe it, and hope to be happy with you, and make you happy also.

WEISLINGEN. I feel nothing but that I am entirely thine. [*Embraces her.*

MARIA. Softly! — I gave you one kiss for earnest, but you must not take possession of what is only yours conditionally.

WEISLINGEN. You are too strict, Maria! Innocent love is pleasing in the sight of Heaven, instead of giving offence.

MARIA. It may be so. But I think differently; for I have been taught that caresses are, like fetters, strong through their union, and that maidens, when they love, are weaker than Samson after the loss of his locks.

WEISLINGEN. Who taught you so?

MARIA. The abbess of my convent. Till my sixteenth year I was with her — and it is only with you that I enjoy happiness like that her company afforded me. She had loved, and could tell — She had a most affectionate heart. Oh! she was an excellent woman!

WEISLINGEN. Then you resemble her. (*Takes her hand.*) What will become of me when I am compelled to leave you?

MARIA (*withdrawing her hand*). You will feel some regret, I hope; for I know what my feelings will be. But you must away!

WEISLINGEN. I know it, dearest; and I will — for well I feel what happiness I shall purchase by this sacrifice! Now, blessed be your brother, and the day on which he rode out to capture me!

MARIA. His heart was full of hope for you and himself. "Farewell," he said at his departure: "I go to recover my friend."

WEISLINGEN. That he has done. Would that I had studied the arrangement and security of my property, instead of neglecting it, and dallying at that worthless court! — then couldst thou have been instantly mine.

MARIA. Even delay has its pleasures.

WEISLINGEN. Say not so, Maria, else I shall fear that thy heart is less warm than mine. True, I deserve punishment; but what hopes will brighten every step of my journey! To be wholly thine, to live only for thee and thy circle of friends — far removed from the world, in the enjoyment of all the raptures which two hearts can mutually bestow. What is the favour of princes, what the applause of the universe, to such simple yet unequalled felicity? Many have been my hopes and wishes, but this happiness surpasses them all.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Your page has returned. He can scarcely utter a word for hunger and fatigue. My wife has ordered him some refreshment. Thus much I have gathered: the bishop will not give up my page — imperial commissioners are to be appointed, and a day named, upon which the matter may be adjusted. Be that as it may, Adelbert, you are free. Pledge me but your hand that you will for the future give neither open nor secret assistance to my enemies.

WEISLINGEN. Here I grasp thy hand. From this moment be our friendship and confidence firm and unalterable as a primary law of nature! Let me take this hand also (*takes* MARIA'S *hand*), and with it the possession of this most noble lady.

GOETZ. May I say yes for you?

MARIA (*timidly*). If — if it is your wish —

GOETZ. Happily our wishes do not differ on this

point. Thou need'st not blush — the glance of thine eye betrays thee. Well, then, Weislingen, join hands; and I say *Amen!* My friend and brother! I thank thee, sister: thou canst do more than spin flax, for thou hast drawn a thread which can fetter this wandering bird of paradise. Yet you look not quite at your ease, Adelbert. What troubles you? *I* am perfectly happy! What I but hoped in a dream, I now see with my eyes, and feel as though I were still dreaming. Now my dream is explained. I thought last night, that, in token of reconciliation, I gave you this iron hand, and that you held it so fast that it broke away from my arm: I started, and awoke. Had I but dreamed a little longer, I should have seen how you gave me a new living hand. You must away this instant, to put your castle and property in order. That cursed court has made you neglect both. I must call my wife. — Elizabeth!

MARIA. How overjoyed my brother is!

WEISLINGEN. Yet I am still more so.

GOETZ (*to* MARIA). You will have a pleasant residence.

MARIA. Franconia is a fine country.

WEISLINGEN. And I may venture to say that my castle lies in the most fertile and delicious part of it.

GOETZ. That you may, and I can confirm it. Look you, here flows the Main, round a hill clothed with corn-fields and vineyards, its top crowned with a Gothic castle: then the river make a sharp turn, and glides round behind the rock on which the castle is built. The windows of the great hall look perpendicularly down upon the river, and command a prospect of many miles in extent.

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH. What are ye about?

GOETZ. You, too, must give your hand, and say, God bless you! They are a pair.

ELIZABETH. So soon?

GOETZ. But not unexpectedly.

ELIZABETH. May you ever adore her as ardently as while you sought her hand! And then, as your love, so be your happiness!

WEISLINGEN. Amen! I seek no happiness but on this condition.

GOETZ. The bridegroom, my love, must leave us for awhile; for this great change will involve many smaller ones. He must first withdraw himself from the bishop's court, in order that their friendship may gradually cool. Then he must rescue his property from the hands of selfish stewards, and . . . But come, sister; come, Elizabeth; let us leave him; his page has, no doubt, private messages for him.

WEISLINGEN. Nothing but what you may hear.

GOETZ. 'Tis needless. Franconians and Swabians! Ye are now more closely united than ever. Now we shall be able to keep the princes in check.

[*Exeunt* GOETZ, ELIZABETH, MARIA.

WEISLINGEN (*alone*). God in heaven! And canst thou have reserved such happiness for one so unworthy? It is too much for my heart. How meanly I depended upon wretched fools, whom I thought I was governing, upon the smile of princes, upon the homage of those around me! Goetz, my faithful Goetz, thou has restored me to thyself; and thou, Maria, hast completed my reformation. I feel free, as if brought from a dungeon into the open air. Bamberg will I never see more, — will snap all the shameful bonds that have held me beneath myself. My heart expands, and never more will I degrade myself by struggling for a greatness that is denied me. He alone is great and happy who fills his own station of independence, and has neither to command nor to obey.

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. God save you, noble sir! I bring you so many salutations that I know not where to begin. Bamberg, and ten miles around, cry with a thousand voices, God save you!

WEISLINGEN. Welcome, Francis! Bring'st thou aught else?

FRANCIS. You are held in such consideration at court that it cannot be expressed.

WEISLINGEN. That will not last long.

FRANCIS. As long as you live; and after your death it will shine with more lustre than the brazen characters on a monument. How they took your misfortune to heart!

WEISLINGEN. And what said the bishop?

FRANCIS. His eager curiosity poured out question upon question, without giving me time to answer. He knew of your accident already; for Färber, who escaped from Haslach, had brought him the tidings. But he wished to hear every particular. He asked so anxiously whether you were wounded. I told him you were whole, from the hair of your head to the nail of your little toe.

WEISLINGEN. And what said he to the proposals?

FRANCIS. He was ready at first to give up the page and a ransom to boot for your liberty. But when he heard you were to be dismissed without ransom, and merely to give your parole that the boy should be set free, he was for putting off Berlichingen with some pretence. He charged me with a thousand messages to you, more than I can ever utter. Oh, how he harangued! It was a long sermon upon the text, "I cannot live without Weislingen!"

WEISLINGEN. He must learn to do so.

FRANCIS. What mean you? He said, "Bid him hasten: all the court waits for him."

WEISLINGEN. Let them wait on. I shall not go to court.

FRANCIS. Not go to court! My gracious lord, how come you to say so? If you knew what I know, could you but dream what I have seen —

WEISLINGEN. What ails thee?

FRANCIS. The bare remembrance takes away my senses. Bamberg is no longer Bamberg. An angel of heaven, in semblance of woman, has taken up her abode there, and has made it a paradise.

WEISLINGEN. Is that all?

FRANCIS. May I become a shaven friar if the first glimpse of her does not drive you frantic!

WEISLINGEN. Who is it, then?

FRANCIS. Adelaide von Walldorf.

WEISLINGEN. Indeed! I have heard much of her beauty.

FRANCIS. Heard! You might as well say I have *seen* music. So far is the tongue from being able to rehearse the slightest particle of her beauty, that the very eye which beholds her cannot drink it all in.

WEISLINGEN. You are mad.

FRANCIS. That may well be. The last time I was in her company I had no more command over my senses than if I had been drunk, or, I may rather say, I felt like a glorified saint enjoying the angelic vision! All my senses exalted, more lively and more perfect than ever, yet not one at its owner's command.

WEISLINGEN. That is strange!

FRANCIS. As I took leave of the bishop, she sat by him: they were playing at chess. He was very gracious, gave me his hand to kiss, and said much, of which I heard not a syllable; for I was looking on his fair antagonist. Her eye was fixed upon the board, as if meditating a bold move. — A touch of subtle watchfulness around the mouth and cheek. I could have wished to be the ivory king. The mixture of dignity and feeling on her brow — and the dazzling lustre of her face and neck, heightened by her raven tresses —

WEISLINGEN. The theme has made you quite poetical.

FRANCIS. I feel at this moment what constitutes poetic inspiration, — a heart altogether wrapt in one idea. As the bishop ended, and I made my obeisance, she looked up, and said, "Offer to your master the best wishes of an unknown. Tell him he must come soon. New friends await him: he must not despise them, though he is already so rich in old ones." I would have answered; but the passage betwixt my heart and my tongue was closed, and I only bowed. I would have given all I had for permission to kiss but one of her fingers! As I stood thus, the bishop let fall a pawn; and, in stooping to pick it up, I touched the hem of her garment. Transport thrilled through my limbs, and I scarce know how I left the room.

WEISLINGEN. Is her husband at court?

FRANCIS. She has been a widow these four months, and is residing at the court of Bamberg to divert her melancholy. You will see her, and to meet her glance is to bask in the sunshine of spring.

WEISLINGEN. She would not make so strong an impression on me.

FRANCIS. I hear you are as good as married.

WEISLINGEN. Would I were really so! My gentle Maria will be the happiness of my life. The sweetness of her soul beams through her mild blue eyes; and, like an angel of innocence and love, she guides my heart to the paths of peace and felicity! Pack up, and then to my castle. I will not to Bamberg, though St. Bede came in person to fetch me.

[*Exit* WEISLINGEN.

FRANCIS (*alone*). Not to Bamberg! Heavens forbid! But let me hope the best. Maria is beautiful and amiable, and a prisoner or an invalid might easily fall in love with her. Her eyes beam with compassion and melancholy sympathy; but in thine, Adelaide, is

life, fire, spirit. I would . . . I am a fool: one glance from her has made me so. My master must to Bamberg, and I also, and either recover my senses or gaze them quite away.

ACT II.

Scene I. — *Bamberg. A Hall.*

The Bishop *and* Adelaide (*playing at chess*), Liebtraut (*with a guitar*), Ladies *and* Courtiers (*standing in groups*).

Liebtraut (*plays and sings*).

Armed with quiver and bow,
With his torch all aglow,
Young Cupid comes winging his flight.
Courage glows in his eyes,
As adown from the skies,
He rushes, impatient for fight.

Up! up!
On! on!
Hark! the bright quiver rings!
Hark! the rustle of wings!
All hail to the delicate sprite!

They welcome the urchin; —
Ah, maidens, beware!
He finds every bosom
Unguarded and bare.
In the light of his flambeau
He kindles his darts; —
They fondle and hug him
And press to their hearts.

ADELAIDE. Your thoughts are not in your game. Check to the king!

BISHOP. There is still a way of escape.

ADELAIDE. You will not be able to hold out long. Check to the king!

LIEBTRAUT. Were I a great prince, I would not play at this game, and would forbid it at court, and throughout the whole land.

ADELAIDE. 'Tis indeed a touchstone of the brain.

LIEBTRAUT. Not on that account. I would rather hear a funeral bell, the cry of the ominous bird, the howling of that snarling watch-dog, conscience, — rather would I hear these through the deepest sleep, than from bishops, knights, and such beasts, the eternal — Check to the king!

BISHOP. Into whose head could such an idea enter?

LIEBTRAUT. A man's, for example, endowed with a weak body and a strong conscience, which, for the most part, indeed, accompany each other. Chess is called a royal game, and is said to have been invented for a king, who rewarded the inventor with a mine of wealth. If this be so, I can picture him to myself. He was a minor, either in understanding or in years, under the guardianship of his mother or his wife; had down upon his chin, and flaxen hair around his temples; was pliant as a willow-shoot, and liked to play at draughts with women, not from passion, God forbid! only for pastime. His tutor, too active for a scholar, too intractable for a man of the world, invented the game, *in usum Delphini*, that was so homogeneous with his Majesty — and so on.

ADELAIDE. Checkmate! You should fill up the chasms in our histories, Liebtraut. [*They rise.*

LIEBTRAUT. To supply those in our family registers would be more profitable. The merits of our ancestors, as well as their portraits, being available for a common object, namely, to cover the naked sides of our cham-

bers and of our characters, one might turn such an occupation to good account.

BISHOP. He will not come, you say.

ADELAIDE. I beseech you, banish him from your thoughts.

BISHOP. What can it mean?

LIEBTRAUT. What! The reasons may be told over like the beads of a rosary. He has been seized with a fit of compunction, of which I could soon cure him.

BISHOP. Do so: ride to him instantly.

LIEBTRAUT. My commission —

BISHOP. Shall be unlimited. Spare nothing to bring him back.

LIEBTRAUT. May I venture to use your name, gracious lady?

ADELAIDE. With discretion.

LIEBTRAUT. That's a vague commission.

ADELAIDE. Do you know so little of me, or are you so young, as not to understand in what tone you should speak of me to Weislingen?

LIEBTRAUT. In the tone of a fowler's whistle, I think.

ADELAIDE. You will never come to your senses.

LIEBTRAUT. Does ever any one, gracious lady?

BISHOP. Go! Go! Take the best horse in my stable; choose your servants, and bring him hither.

LIEBTRAUT. If I do not conjure him hither, say that an old woman who charms warts and freckles knows more of sympathy than I.

BISHOP. Yet, what will it avail? Berlichingen has wholly gained him over. He will no sooner be here than he will wish to return.

LIEBTRAUT. Wish, no doubt he will; but will he be able? A prince's squeeze of the hand and the smiles of a beauty, from these no Weislingen can tear himself away. I have the honour to take my leave.

BISHOP. A prosperous journey!

ADELAIDE. Adieu! [*Exit* LIEBTRAUT.

BISHOP. When once he is here, I must trust to you.

ADELAIDE. Would you make me your lime-twig?

BISHOP. By no means.

ADELAIDE. Your call-bird, then?

BISHOP. No: that is Liebtraut's part. I beseech you do not refuse to do for me what no other can.

ADELAIDE. We shall see. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Jaxthausen. A Hall in Goetz's Castle.*

Enter GOETZ *and* HANS VON SELBITZ.

SELBITZ. Every one will applaud you for declaring feud against the Nurembergers.

GOETZ. It would have eaten my very heart away had I remained longer their debtor. It is clear that they betrayed my page to the Bambergers. They shall have cause to remember me.

SELBITZ. They have an old grudge against you.

GOETZ. And I against them. I am glad they have begun the fray.

SELBITZ. These free towns have always taken part with the priests.

GOETZ. They have good reason.

SELBITZ. But we will cook their porridge for them!

GOETZ. I reckon upon you. Would that the Burgomaster of Nuremberg, with his gold chain round his neck, fell in our way: we'd astonish him with all his cleverness.

SELBITZ. I hear Weislingen is again on your side. Does he really join in our league?

GOETZ. Not immediately. There are reasons which prevent his openly giving us assistance, but for the present it is quite enough that he is not against us.

The priest without him is what the stole would be without the priest!

SELBITZ. When do we set forward?

GOETZ. To-morrow or next day. There are merchants of Bamberg and Nuremberg returning from the fair of Frankfort — We may strike a good blow.

SELBITZ. Let us hope so!

SCENE III. — *The Bishop's Palace at Bamberg.*

ADELAIDE *and her* WAITING-MAID.

ADELAIDE. He is here, sayest thou? I can scarce believe it.

MAID. Had I not seen him myself, I should have doubted it.

ADELAIDE. The bishop should frame Liebtraut in gold for such a masterpiece of skill.

MAID. I saw him as he was about to enter the palace. He was mounted on a gray charger. The horse started when he came on the bridge, and would not move forward. The populace thronged up the street to see him. They rejoiced at the delay of the unruly horse. He was greeted on all sides, and he thanked them gracefully all round. He sat the curvetting steed with an easy indifference, and by threats and soothing brought him to the gate, followed by Liebtraut and a few servants.

ADELAIDE. What do you think of him?

MAID. I never saw a man who pleased me so well. He is as like that portrait of the emperor as if he were his son (*pointing to a picture*). His nose is somewhat smaller, but just such gentle light-brown eyes, just such fine light hair, and such a figure! A half-melancholy expression on his face, I know not how; but he pleased me so well.

ADELAIDE. I am curious to see him.

MAID. He would be the husband for you!

ADELAIDE. Foolish girl!

MAID. Children and fools —

Enter LIEBTRAUT.

LIEBTRAUT. Now, gracious lady, what do I deserve?

ADELAIDE. Horns from your wife! — for, judging from the present sample of your persuasive powers, you have certainly endangered the honour of many a worthy family.

LIEBTRAUT. Not so, be assured, gracious lady.

ADELAIDE. How did you contrive to bring him?

LIEBTRAUT. You know how they catch snipes, and why should I detail my little stratagems to you? — First, I pretended to have heard nothing, did not understand the reason of his behaviour, and put him upon the disadvantage of telling me the whole story at length; then I saw the matter in a light altogether different from what he did — could not find — could not see, and so forth; then I gossiped things great and small about Bamberg, and recalled to his memory certain old recollections; and, when I had succeeded in occupying his imagination, I knitted together many a broken association of ideas. He knew not what to say — felt newly attracted to Bamberg — he would, and he would not. When I found him begin to waver, and saw him too much occupied with his own feelings to suspect my sincerity, I threw over his head a halter, woven of the three powerful cords, beauty, court favour, and flattery, and dragged him hither in triumph.

ADELAIDE. What said you of me?

LIEBTRAUT. The simple truth, — that you were in perplexity about your estates, and had hoped, as he had so much influence with the emperor, all would be satisfactorily settled.

ADELAIDE. 'Tis well.

LIEBTRAUT. The bishop will introduce him to you.

ADELAIDE. I expect them. (*Exit* LIEBTRAUT.) And with such feelings have I seldom expected a visitor.

SCENE IV. — *The Spessart.*

Enter SELBITZ, GOETZ, *and* GEORGE, *in the armour and dress of a trooper.*

GOETZ. So, thou didst not find him, George?

GEORGE. He had ridden to Bamberg the day before, with Liebtraut and two servants.

GOETZ. I cannot understand what this means.

SELBITZ. But I do: your reconciliation was almost too speedy to be lasting. Liebtraut is a cunning fellow, and has, no doubt, inveigled him over.

GOETZ. Think'st thou he will become a traitor?

SELBITZ. The first step is taken.

GOETZ. I can't believe it. Who knows what he may have to do at court? — his affairs are not yet settled. Let us hope for the best.

SELBITZ. Would to Heaven he may deserve of your good opinion, and may act for the best!

GOETZ. A thought strikes me! — We will disguise George in the spoils of the Bamberg trooper, and furnish him with the password: he may then ride to Bamberg, and see how matters stand.

GEORGE. I have long wished to do so.

GOETZ. It is thy first expedition. Be careful, boy: I should be sorry if ill befell thee.

GEORGE. Never fear. I care not how many of them crawl about me. I think no more of them than of rats and mice. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. — *The Bishop's Palace. His Cabinet.*

The BISHOP *and* WEISLINGEN.

BISHOP. Then, thou wilt stay no longer?

WEISLINGEN. You would not have me break my oath.

BISHOP. I could have wished thou hadst not sworn it. — What evil spirit possessed thee? — Could I not have procured thy release without that? Is my influence so small in the imperial court?

WEISLINGEN. The thing is done: excuse it as you can.

BISHOP. I cannot see that there was the least necessity for taking such a step — To renounce me? — Were there not a thousand other ways of procuring thy freedom? — Had we not his page? And would not I have given gold enough to boot, and thus satisfied Berlichingen? Our operations against him and his confederates could have gone on . . . But, alas! I do not reflect that I am talking to his friend, who has joined him against me, and can easily counterwork the mines he himself has dug.

WEISLINGEN. My gracious lord —

BISHOP. And yet — when I again look on thy face, again hear thy voice — it is impossible — impossible!

WEISLINGEN. Farewell, good my lord!

BISHOP. I give thee my blessing — formerly, when we parted, I was wont to say, "Till we meet again!" — Now, Heaven grant we meet no more!

WEISLINGEN. Things may alter.

BISHOP. Perhaps I may live to see thee appear as an enemy before my walls, carrying havoc through the fertile plains which now owe their flourishing condition to thee.

WEISLINGEN. Never, my gracious lord!

BISHOP. You cannot say so. My temporal neighbours all have a grudge against me; but while thou wert mine . . . Go, Weislingen! — I have no more to say — Thou hast undone much — Go —

WEISLINGEN. I know not what to answer.

[*Exit* BISHOP.

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. The lady Adelaide expects you. She is not well, but she will not let you depart without bidding her adieu.

WEISLINGEN. Come.

FRANCIS. Do we go for certain?

WEISLINGEN. This very night.

FRANCIS. I feel as if I were about to leave the world —

WEISLINGEN. I too, and as if, besides, I knew not whither to go.

SCENE VI. — *Adelaide's Apartment.*

ADELAIDE *and* WAITING-MAID.

MAID. You are pale, gracious lady.

ADELAIDE. I love him not; yet I wish him to stay — for I am fond of his company, though I should not like him for my husband.

MAID. Does your ladyship think he will go?

ADELAIDE. He is even now bidding the bishop farewell.

MAID. He has yet a severe struggle to undergo.

ADELAIDE. What meanest thou?

MAID. Why do you ask, gracious lady? The barbed hook is in his heart: ere he tear it away, he must bleed to death.

Enter WEISLINGEN.

WEISLINGEN. You are not well, gracious lady?

ADELAIDE. That must be indifferent to you — you leave us, leave us for ever: what matters it to you whether we live or die?

WEISLINGEN. You do me injustice.

ADELAIDE. I judge you as you appear.

WEISLINGEN. Appearances are deceitful,

ADELAIDE. Then, you are a chameleon.

WEISLINGEN. Could you but see my heart —

ADELAIDE. I should see fine things there.

WEISLINGEN. Undoubtedly! — You would find in it your own image —

ADELAIDE. Thrust into some dark corner, with the pictures of defunct ancestors! I beseech you, Weislingen, consider with whom you speak: false words are of value only when they serve to veil our actions; a discovered masquerader plays a pitiful part. You do not disown your deeds, yet your words belie them: what are we to think of you?

WEISLINGEN. What you will — I am so agonised at reflecting on what I am, that I little reck for what I am taken.

ADELAIDE. You came to say farewell.

WEISLINGEN. Permit me to kiss your hand, and I will say adieu! . . . You remind me — I did not think — but I am troublesome —

ADELAIDE. You misinterpret me. Since you will depart, I only wished to assist your resolution.

WEISLINGEN. Oh, say rather, I must! — were I not compelled, by my knightly word, — my solemn engagement —

ADELAIDE. Go to! Talk of that to maidens who read "Theuerdanck," and wish they had such a husband. — Knightly word! — Nonsense!

WEISLINGEN. That is not your opinion.

ADELAIDE. On my honour, you are dissembling. What have you promised? and to whom? You have

pledged your alliance to one who is a traitor to the emperor, at the very moment when he incurred the ban of the empire by taking you prisoner. Such an agreement is no more binding than an extorted, unjust oath. And do not our laws release you from such oaths? Go, tell that to children, who believe in Rübezahl. There is something behind all this. — To become an enemy of the empire — a disturber of public happiness and tranquillity, an enemy of the emperor, the associate of a robber! — Thou, Weislingen, with thy gentle soul!

WEISLINGEN. If you knew him —

ADELAIDE. I would deal justly with Goetz. He has a lofty, indomitable spirit; and woe to thee, therefore, Weislingen! Go, and persuade thyself thou art his companion. Go, and receive his commands. Thou art courteous, gentle —

WEISLINGEN. And he too.

ADELAIDE. But thou art yielding, and he is stubborn. Imperceptibly will he draw thee on. Thou wilt become the slave of a baron, — thou that mightest command princes! — Yet it is cruel to make you discontented with your future position.

WEISLINGEN. Did you but know what kindness he showed me.

ADELAIDE. Kindness! — Do you make such a merit of that? It was his duty. And what would you have lost had he acted otherwise? I would rather he had done so. An overbearing man like —

WEISLINGEN. You are speaking of your enemy.

ADELAIDE. I was speaking for your freedom; yet I know not why I should take so much interest in it. Farewell!

WEISLINGEN. Permit me, but a moment.

[*Takes her hand. A pause.*

ADELAIDE. Have you aught to say?

WEISLINGEN. I must hence.

ADELAIDE. Then, go.

WEISLINGEN. Gracious lady, I cannot.

ADELAIDE. You must.

WEISLINGEN. And is this your parting look ?

ADELAIDE. Go: I am unwell, very inopportunely.

WEISLINGEN. Look not on me thus!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou be our enemy, and yet have us smile upon thee ? — go!

WEISLINGEN. Adelaide!

ADELAIDE. I hate thee!

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. Noble sir, the bishop inquires for you.

ADELAIDE. Go! go!

FRANCIS. He begs you to come instantly.

ADELAIDE. Go! go!

WEISLINGEN. I do not say adieu: I shall see you again. [*Exeunt* WEISLINGEN *and* FRANCIS.

ADELAIDE. Thou wilt see me again ? We must provide for that. Margaret, when he comes, refuse him admittance. Say I am ill, have a headache, am asleep, anything. If this does not detain him, nothing will. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. — *An Anteroom.*

WEISLINGEN *and* FRANCIS.

WEISLINGEN. She will not see me!

FRANCIS. Night draws on: shall we saddle ?

WEISLINGEN. She will not see me!

FRANCIS. Shall I order the horses ?

WEISLINGEN. It is too late: we stay here.

FRANCIS. God be praised! [*Exit.*

WEISLINGEN (*alone*). Thou stayest! Be on thy guard — the temptation is great. My horse started at the castle-gate. My good angel stood before him: he

knew the danger that awaited me. Yet it would be wrong to leave in confusion the various affairs entrusted to me by the bishop, without, at least, so arranging them, that my successor may be able to continue where I left off. Thus much I can do without injury to Berlichingen, and my alliance with him; and, when it is done, no one shall detain me. Yet it would have been better that I had never come. But I will away — to-morrow — or next day. [*Exit.*

Scene VIII. — *The Spessart.*

Enter Goetz, Selbitz, *and* George.

Selbitz. You see, it has turned out as I prophesied.

Goetz. No, no, no!

George. I tell you the truth, believe me. I did as you commanded, took the dress and password of the Bamberg trooper, and escorted some peasants of the Lower Rhine, who paid my expenses for my convoy.

Selbitz. In that disguise? It might have cost thee dear.

George. So I begin to think, now that it's over. A trooper who thinks of danger beforehand will never do anything great. I got safely to Bamberg; and in the very first inn I heard them tell how the bishop and Weislingen were reconciled, and how Weislingen was to marry the widow of Von Walldorf.

Goetz. Mere gossip!

George. I saw him as he led her to table. She is lovely, by my faith, most lovely! We all bowed — she thanked us all. He nodded, and seemed highly pleased. They passed on; and everybody murmured, "What a handsome pair!"

Goetz. That may be.

George. Listen further. The next day, as he went to mass, I watched my opportunity; he was attended

only by his squire: I stood at the steps, and whispered to him as he passed, "A few words from your friend Berlichingen." He started — I marked the confession of guilt in his face. He had scarcely the heart to look at me — me, a poor trooper's boy!

SELBITZ. His evil conscience degrades him more than thy condition does thee.

GEORGE. "Art thou of Bamberg?" said he. "The Knight of Berlichingen greets you," said I, "and I am to inquire —" "Come to my apartment to-morrow morning," quoth he, "and we will speak further."

GOETZ. And you went?

GEORGE. Yes, certainly, I went, and waited in his antechamber a long, long time; and his pages, in their silken doublets, stared at me from head to foot. Stare on, thought I. At length I was admitted. He seemed angry. But what cared I? I gave my message. He began blustering like a coward who wants to look brave. He wondered that you should take him to task through a trooper's boy. That angered me. "There are but two sorts of people," said I, "true men and scoundrels; and I serve Goetz of Berlichingen." Then he began to talk all manner of nonsense, which all tended to one point; namely, that you had hurried him into an agreement, that he owed you no allegiance, and would have nothing to do with you.

GOETZ. Hadst thou that from his own mouth?

GEORGE. That, and yet more. He threatened me —

GOETZ. It is enough. He is lost for ever. Faith and confidence, again have ye deceived me. Poor Maria! how am I to break this to you?

SELBITZ. I would rather lose my other leg than be such a rascal.

SCENE IX. — *Hall in the Bishop's Palace at Bamberg.*

ADELAIDE *and* WEISLINGEN *discovered.*

ADELAIDE. Time begins to hang insupportably heavy here. I dare not speak seriously, and I am ashamed to trifle with you. Ennui, thou art worse than a slow fever.

WEISLINGEN. Are you tired of me already?

ADELAIDE. Not so much of you as of your society. I would you had gone when you wished, and that we had not detained you.

WEISLINGEN. Such is woman's favour! At first she fosters with maternal warmth our dearest hopes; and then, like an inconstant hen, she forsakes the nest, and abandons the infant brood to death and decay.

ADELAIDE. Yes, you may rail at women. The reckless gambler tears and curses the harmless cards which have been the instruments of his loss. But let me tell you something about *men*. What are you that talk about fickleness? You that are seldom even what you would wish to be, never what you should be. Princes in holiday garb! the envy of the vulgar. Oh, what would not a tailor's wife give for a necklace of the pearls on the skirt of your robe, which you kick back contemptuously with your heels.

WEISLINGEN. You are severe.

ADELAIDE. It is but the antistrophe to your song. Ere I knew you, Weislingen, I felt like the tailor's wife. Hundred-tongued rumour, to speak without metaphor, had so extolled you, in quack-doctor fashion, that I was tempted to wish, Oh, that I could but see this quintessence of manhood, this phœnix, Weislingen! My wish was granted.

WEISLINGEN. And the phœnix turned out a dunghill cock.

ADELAIDE. No, Weislingen: I took an interest in you.

WEISLINGEN. So it appeared.

ADELAIDE. So it *was* — for you really surpassed your reputation. The multitude prize only the reflection of worth. For my part, I do not care to scrutinise the character of those I like and esteem: so we lived on for some time. I felt there was a deficiency in you, but knew not what I missed: at length my eyes were opened — I saw instead of the energetic being who gave impulse to the affairs of a kingdom, and was ever alive to the voice of fame; who was wont to pile princely project on project, till, like the mountains of the Titans, they reached the clouds, — instead of all this, I saw a man as querulous as a love-sick poet, as melancholy as a slighted damsel, and more indolent than an old bachelor. I first ascribed it to your misfortune, which still lay at your heart, and excused you as well as I could; but now that it daily becomes worse, you must really forgive me if I withdraw my favour from you. You possess it unjustly: I bestowed it for life on a hero who cannot transfer it to you.

WEISLINGEN. Dismiss me, then.

ADELAIDE. Not till all chance of recovery is lost. Solitude is fatal in your distemper. Alas! poor man! you are as dejected as one whose first love has proved false, and therefore I won't give you up. Give me your hand, and pardon what affection has urged me to say.

WEISLINGEN. Couldst thou but love me, couldst thou but return the fervour of my passion with the least glow of sympathy. — Adelaide, thy reproaches are most unjust. Couldst thou but guess the hundredth part of my sufferings, thou wouldst not have tortured me so unmercifully with encouragement, indifference, and contempt. You smile. To be reconciled to myself after the step I have taken must be the work of more than one day. How can I plot against

the man who has been so recently and so vividly restored to my affection?

ADELAIDE. Strange being! Can you love him whom you envy? It is like sending provisions to an enemy.

WEISLINGEN. I well know that here there must be no dallying. He is aware that I am again Weislingen, and he will watch his advantage over us. Besides, Adelaide, we are not so sluggish as you think. Our troopers are reënforced and watchful; our schemes are proceeding; and the Diet of Augsburg will, I hope, soon bring them to a favourable issue.

ADELAIDE. You go there?

WEISLINGEN. If I could carry a glimpse of hope with me. [*Kisses her hand.*

ADELAIDE. Oh! ye infidels! Always signs and wonders required. Go, Weislingen, and accomplish the work! The interest of the bishop, yours and mine, are all so linked together, that were it only for policy's sake —

WEISLINGEN. You jest.

ADELAIDE. I do not jest. The haughty duke has seized my property. Goetz will not be slow to ravage yours; and if we do not hold together, as our enemies do, and gain over the emperor to our side, we are lost.

WEISLINGEN. I fear nothing. Most of the princes think with us. The emperor needs assistance against the Turks, and it is therefore just that he should help us in his turn. What rapture for me to rescue your fortune from rapacious enemies; to crush the mutinous chivalry of Swabia; to restore peace to the bishopric, and then —

ADELAIDE. One day brings on another, and fate is mistress of the future.

WEISLINGEN. But we must lend our endeavours.

ADELAIDE. We do so.

WEISLINGEN. But seriously.
ADELAIDE. Well, then, seriously. Do but go —
WEISLINGEN. Enchantress! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. — *An Inn.*

The Bridal of a PEASANT.

The BRIDE'S FATHER, BRIDE, BRIDEGROOM, *and other Country-folks*, GOETZ OF BERLICHINGEN, *and* HANS OF SELBITZ *all discovered at table.* TROOPERS *and* PEASANTS *attend.*

GOETZ. It was the best way thus to settle your lawsuit by a merry bridal.

BRIDE'S FATHER. Better than ever I could have dreamed of, noble sir, — to spend my days in quiet with my neighbour, and have a daughter provided for to boot.

BRIDEGROOM. And I to get the bone of contention and a pretty wife into the bargain! Ay, the prettiest in the whole village. Would to Heaven you had consented sooner!

GOETZ. How long have you been at law?

BRIDE'S FATHER. About eight years. I would rather have the fever for twice that time, than go through with it again from the beginning. For these periwigged gentry never give a decision till you tear it out of their very hearts; and, after all, what do you get for your pains? The Devil fly away with the assessor Sapupi for a damned swarthy Italian!

BRIDEGROOM. Yes, he's a pretty fellow: I was before him twice.

BRIDE'S FATHER. And I thrice: and look ye, gentlemen, we got a judgment at last, which set forth that he was as much in the right as I, and I as much as he;

so there we stood like a couple of fools, till a good Providence put it into my head to give him my daughter and the ground besides.

GOETZ (*drinks*). To your better understanding in future.

BRIDE'S FATHER. With all my heart! But, come what may, I'll never go to law again as long as I live. What a mint of money it costs! For every bow made to you by a procurator, you must come down with your dollars.

SELBITZ. But there are annual imperial visitations.

BRIDE'S FATHER. I have never heard of them. Many an extra dollar have they contrived to squeeze out of me. The expenses are horrible.

GOETZ. How mean you?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Why, look you, these gentlemen of the law are always holding out their hands. The assessor alone, God forgive him, eased me of eighteen golden guilders.

BRIDEGROOM. Who?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Why, who else but Sapupi?

GOETZ. That is infamous.

BRIDE'S FATHER. Yes: he asked twenty; and there I had to pay them in the great hall of his fine country-house. I thought my heart would burst with anguish. For look you, my lord, I am well enough off with my house and little farm; but how could I raise the ready cash? I stood there, God knows how it was with me. I had not a single farthing to carry me on my journey. At last I took courage, and told him my case: when he saw I was desperate, he flung me back a couple of guilders, and sent me about my business.

BRIDEGROOM. Impossible! Sapupi?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Ay, he himself! What do you stare at?

BRIDEGROOM. Devil take the rascal! He took fifteen guilders from me too!

BRIDE'S FATHER. The deuce he did!

SELBITZ. They call us robbers, Goetz!

BRIDE'S FATHER. Bribed on both sides! That's why the judgment fell out so queer. Oh! the scoundrel!

GOETZ. You must not let this pass unnoticed.

BRIDE'S FATHER. What can we do?

GOETZ. Why — go to Spire, where there is an imperial visitation: make your complaint; they must inquire into it, and help you to your own again.

BRIDEGROOM. Does your honour think we shall succeed?

GOETZ. If I might take it in hand, I could promise it you.

SELBITZ. The sum is worth an attempt.

GOETZ. Ay: many a day have I ridden out for the fourth part of it.

BRIDE'S FATHER (*to* BRIDEGROOM). What think'st thou?

BRIDEGROOM. We'll try, come what may.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. The Nurembergers have set out.

GOETZ. Whereabouts are they?

GEORGE. If we ride off quietly, we shall just catch them in the wood betwixt Berheim and Mühlbach.

SELBITZ. Excellent.

GOETZ. Well, my children, God bless you, and help every man to his own!

BRIDE'S FATHER. Thanks, gallant sir! Will you not stay to supper?

GOETZ. We cannot. Adieu!

[*Exeunt* GOETZ, SELBITZ, *and* TROOPERS.

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A Garden at Augsburg.*

Enter two MERCHANTS *of Nuremberg.*

FIRST MERCHANT. We'll stand here, for the emperor must pass this way. He is just coming up the long avenue.

SECOND MERCHANT. Who is he that's with him?

FIRST MERCHANT. Adelbert of Weislingen.

SECOND MERCHANT. The bishop's friend. That's lucky!

FIRST MERCHANT. We'll throw ourselves at his feet.

SECOND MERCHANT. See! they come.

Enter the EMPEROR *and* WEISLINGEN.

FIRST MERCHANT. He looks displeased.

EMPEROR. I am disheartened, Weislingen. When I review my past life, I am ready to despair. So many half — ay, and wholly ruined undertakings — and all because the pettiest feudatory of the empire thinks more of gratifying his own whims than of seconding my endeavours.

[*The* MERCHANTS *throw themselves at his feet.*

FIRST MERCHANT. Most mighty! Most gracious!

EMPEROR. Who are ye? What seek ye?

FIRST MERCHANT. Poor merchants of Nuremberg, your Majesty's devoted servants, who implore your aid. Goetz von Berlichingen and Hans von Selbitz fell upon thirty of us as we journeyed from the fair of Frankfort, under an escort from Bamberg: they overpowered and plundered us. We implore your imperial assistance to obtain redress, else we are all ruined men, and shall be compelled to beg our bread.

EMPEROR. Good heavens! What is this? The one has but one hand, the other but one leg: if they both had two hands and two legs, what would you do then?

FIRST MERCHANT. We most humbly beseech your Majesty to cast a look of compassion upon our unfortunate condition.

EMPEROR. How is this? — If a merchant loses a bag of pepper, all Germany is to rise in arms; but when business is to be done, in which the imperial majesty and the empire are interested, should it concern dukedoms, principalities, or kingdoms, there is no bringing you together.

WEISLINGEN. You come at an unseasonable time. Go, and stay at Augsburg for a few days.

MERCHANTS. We make our most humble obeisance.

[*Exeunt* MERCHANTS.

EMPEROR. Again new disturbances; they multiply like the hydra's heads!

WEISLINGEN. And can only be extirpated with fire and sword, and a courageous enterprise.

EMPEROR. Do you think so?

WEISLINGEN. Nothing seems to me more advisable, could your Majesty and the princes but accommodate your other unimportant disputes. It is not the body of the state that complains of this malady — Franconia and Swabia alone glow with the embers of civil discord; and even there many of the nobles and free barons long for quiet. Could we but crush Sickingen, Selbitz — and — and Berlichingen, the others would fall asunder; for it is the spirit of these knights which quickens the turbulent multitude.

EMPEROR. Fain would I spare them: they are noble and hardy. Should I be engaged in war, they would follow me to the field.

WEISLINGEN. It is to be wished they had at all times known their duty: moreover it would be dan-

gerous to reward their mutinous bravery by offices of trust. For it is exactly this imperial mercy and forgiveness which they have hitherto so grievously abused, upon which the hope and confidence of their league rest; and this spirit cannot be quelled till we have wholly destroyed their power in the eyes of the world, and taken from them all hope of ever recovering their lost influence.

EMPEROR. You advise severe measures, then?

WEISLINGEN. I see no other means of quelling the spirit of insurrection which has seized upon whole provinces. Do we not already hear the bitterest complaints from the nobles that their vassals and serfs rebel against them, question their authority, and threaten to curtail their hereditary prerogatives? A proceeding which would involve the most fearful consequences.

EMPEROR. This were a fair occasion for proceeding against Berlichingen and Selbitz, but I will not have them personally injured. Could they be taken prisoners, they should swear to renounce their feuds and to remain in their own castles and territories upon their knightly parole. At the next session of the diet we will propose this plan.

WEISLINGEN. A general exclamation of joyful assent will spare your Majesty the trouble of particular detail. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Jaxthausen.*

Enter GOETZ *and* FRANZ VON SICKINGEN.

SICKINGEN. Yes, my friend, I come to beg the heart and hand of your noble sister.

GOETZ. I would you had come sooner. Weislingen, during his imprisonment, obtained her affections,

proposed for her; and I gave my consent. I let the bird loose, and he now despises the benevolent hand that fed him in his distress. He flutters about to seek his food, God knows upon what hedge.

SICKINGEN. Is this so?

GOETZ. Even as I tell you.

SICKINGEN. He has broken a double bond. 'Tis well for you that you were not more closely allied with the traitor.

GOETZ. The poor maiden passes her life in lamentation and prayer.

SICKINGEN. I will comfort her.

GOETZ. What! Could you make up your mind to marry a forsaken —

SICKINGEN. It is to the honour of you both, to have been deceived by him. Should the poor girl be caged in a cloister because the first man who gained her love proved a villain? Not so: I insist on it. She shall be mistress of my castles!

GOETZ. I tell you, he was not indifferent to her.

SICKINGEN. Do you think I cannot efface the recollection of such a wretch? Let us go to her. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE. III. — *The Camp of the Party sent to execute the Imperial Mandate.*

Imperial CAPTAIN *and* OFFICERS *discovered.*

CAPTAIN. We must be cautious, and spare our people as much as possible. Besides, we have strict orders to overpower and take him alive. It will be difficult to obey, for who will engage with him hand to hand?

FIRST OFFICER. 'Tis true. And he will fight like a wild boar. Besides, he has never in his whole life injured any of us; so each will be glad to leave to the

other the honour of risking life and limb to please the emperor.

SECOND OFFICER. 'Twere shame to us should we not take him. Had I him once by the ears, he should not easily escape.

FIRST OFFICER. Don't seize him with your teeth, however: he might chance to run away with your jawbone. My good young sir, such men are not taken like a runaway thief.

SECOND OFFICER. We shall see.

CAPTAIN. By this time he must have had our summons. We must not delay. I mean to despatch a troop to watch his motions.

SECOND OFFICER. Let me lead it.

CAPTAIN. You are unacquainted with the country.

SECOND OFFICER. I have a servant who was born and bred here.

CAPTAIN. That will do. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *Jaxthausen.*

SICKINGEN (*alone*).

All goes as I wish! She was somewhat startled at my proposal, and looked at me from head to foot: I'll wager she was comparing me with her gallant. Thank Heaven I can stand the scrutiny! She answered little and confusedly. So much the better! Let it work for a time. A proposal of marriage does not come amiss after such a cruel disappointment.

Enter GOETZ.

SICKINGEN. What news, brother?

GOETZ. They have laid me under the ban.

SICKINGEN. How?

GOETZ. There, read the edifying epistle. The emperor has issued an edict against me, which gives my

body for food to the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air.

SICKINGEN. They shall first furnish them with a dinner themselves. I am here in the very nick of time.

GOETZ. No, Sickingen, you must leave me. Your great undertakings might be ruined, should you become the enemy of the emperor at so unseasonable a time. Besides, you can be of more use to me by remaining neutral. The worst that can happen, is my being made prisoner; and then your good word with the emperor, who esteems you, may rescue me from the misfortune into which your untimely assistance would irremediably plunge us both. To what purpose should you do otherwise? These troops are marching against me; and, if they knew we were united, their numbers would only be increased, and our position consequently be no better. The emperor is at the fountainhead; and I should be utterly ruined were it as easy to inspire soldiers with courage as to collect them into a body.

SICKINGEN. But I can privately reinforce you with a score of troopers.

GOETZ. Good. I have already sent George to Selbitz, and to my people in the neighbourhood. My dear brother, when my forces are collected, they will be such a troop as few princes can bring together.

SICKINGEN. It will be small against the multitude.

GOETZ. One wolf is too many for a whole flock of sheep.

SICKINGEN. But if they have a good shepherd!

GOETZ. Never fear! They are all hirelings; and then, even the best knight can do but little if he cannot act as he pleases. It happened once, that, to oblige the palsgrave, I went to serve against Conrad Schotten: they then presented me with a paper of instructions from the chancery, which set forth, Thus and thus must you proceed. I threw down the paper before the

magistrates, and told them I could not act according to it; that something might happen unprovided for in my instructions, and that I must use my own eyes and judge what it is best for me to do.

SICKINGEN. Good luck, brother! I will hence, and send thee what men I can collect in haste.

GOETZ. Come first to the women. I left them together. I would you had her consent before you depart! Then send me the troopers, and come back in private to carry away my Maria; for my castle, I fear, will shortly be no abode for women.

SICKINGEN. We will hope for the best.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. — *Bamberg. Adelaide's Chamber.*

ADELAIDE *and* FRANCIS.

ADELAIDE. They have already set out to enforce the ban against both?

FRANCIS. Yes; and my master has the happiness of marching against your enemies. I would gladly have gone also, however rejoiced I always am at being despatched to you. But I will away instantly, and soon return with good news: my master has allowed me to do so.

ADELAIDE. How is he?

FRANCIS. He is well, and commanded me to kiss your hand.

ADELAIDE. There! — Thy lips glow.

FRANCIS (*aside, pressing his breast*). Here glows something yet more fiery. (*Aloud.*) Gracious lady, your servants are the most fortunate of beings!

ADELAIDE. Who goes against Berlichingen?

FRANCIS. The Baron von Sirau. Farewell! Dearest, most gracious lady, I must away. Forget me not!

ADELAIDE. Thou must first take some rest and refreshment.

FRANCIS. I need none, for I have seen you! I am neither weary nor hungry.

ADELAIDE. I know thy fidelity.

FRANCIS. Ah, gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. You can never hold out: you *must* repose and refresh yourself.

FRANCIS. You are too kind to a poor youth. [*Exit.*

ADELAIDE. The tears stood in his eyes. I love him from my heart. Never did man attach himself to me with such warmth of affection. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI. — *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ *and* GEORGE.

GEORGE. He wants to speak with you in person. I do not know him: he is a tall, well-made man, with keen, dark eyes.

GOETZ. Admit him. [*Exit* GEORGE.

Enter LERSE.

GOETZ. God save you! What bring you?

LERSE. Myself: not much; but, such as it is, it is at your service.

GOETZ. You are welcome, doubly welcome! A brave man, and at a time when, far from expecting new friends, I was in hourly fear of losing the old. Your name?

LERSE. Franz Lerse.

GOETZ. I thank you, Franz, for making me acquainted with a brave man!

LERSE. I made you acquainted with me once before, but then you did not thank me for my pains.

GOETZ. I have no recollection of you.

LERSE. I should be sorry if you had. Do you recollect when, to please the Palsgrave, you rode against Conrad Schotten, and went through Hassfurt on an All-hallow's eve?

GOETZ. I remember it well.

LERSE. And twenty-five troopers encountered you in a village by the way?

GOETZ. Exactly. I at first took them for only twelve. I divided my party, which amounted but to sixteen, and halted in the village behind the barn, intending to let them ride by. Then I thought of falling upon them in the rear, as I had concerted with the other troop.

LERSE. We saw you, however, and stationed ourselves on a height above the village. You drew up beneath the hill, and halted. When we perceived that you did not intend to come up to us, we rode down to you.

GOETZ. And then I saw for the first time that I had thrust my hand into the fire. Five and twenty against eight is no jesting business. Everard Truchsess killed one of my followers, for which I knocked him off his horse. Had they all behaved like him and one other trooper, it would have been all over with me and my little band.

LERSE. And that trooper —

GOETZ. Was as gallant a fellow as I ever saw. He attacked me fiercely; and when I thought I had given him enough, and was engaged elsewhere, he was upon me again, and laid on like a fury; he cut quite through my armour, and wounded me in the arm.

LERSE. Have you forgiven him?

GOETZ. He pleased me only too well.

LERSE. I hope, then, you have cause to be contented with me: since the proof of my valour was on your own person.

GOETZ. Art thou he? Oh, welcome! welcome! Canst thou boast, Maximilian, that, amongst thy followers, thou hast gained one after this fashion?

LERSE. I wonder you did not sooner hit upon me.

GOETZ. How could I think that the man would engage in my service who did his best to overpower me?

LERSE. Even so, my lord. From my youth upward I have served as a trooper, and have had a tussle with many a knight. I was overjoyed when we met you; for I had heard of your prowess, and wished to know you. You saw I gave way, and that it was not from cowardice; for I returned to the charge. In short, I learnt to know you; and from that hour I resolved to enter your service.

GOETZ. How long wilt thou engage with me?

LERSE. For a year, without pay.

GOETZ. No: thou shalt have as much as the others; nay, more, as befits him who gave me so much work at Remlin.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. Hans of Selbitz greets you. To-morrow he will be here with fifty men.

GOETZ. 'Tis well.

GEORGE. There is a troop of Imperialists riding down the hill, doubtless to reconnoitre.

GOETZ. How many?

GEORGE. About fifty.

GOETZ. Only fifty! Come, Lerse, we'll have a slash at them; so that when Selbitz comes he may find some work done to his hand.

LERSE. 'Twill be capital practice.

GOETZ. To horse! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. — *A Wood, on the Borders of a Morass.*

Two IMPERIALIST TROOPERS *meeting.*

FIRST IMPERIALIST. What dost thou here?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. I have leave of absence for ten minutes. Ever since our quarters were beat up last night, I have had such violent attacks that I can't sit on horseback for two minutes together.

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Is the party far advanced?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. About three miles into the wood.

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Then, why are you playing truant here?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Prithee, betray me not. I am going to the next village to see if I cannot get some warm bandages, to relieve my complaint. But whence comest thou?

FIRST IMPERIALIST. I am bringing our officer some wine and meat from the nearest village.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. So, so! he stuffs himself under our very noses, and we must starve, — a fine example!

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Come back with me, rascal.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Call me a fool if I do! There are plenty in our troop who would gladly fast, to be as far away as I am. [*Trampling of horses heard.*

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Hearest thou? — Horses!

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Oh, dear! oh, dear!

FIRST IMPERIALIST. I'll get up into this tree.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. And I'll hide among the rushes. [*They hide themselves.*

Enter on horseback, GOETZ, LERSE, GEORGE, *and* TROOPERS, *all completely armed.*

GOETZ. Away into the wood, by the ditch on the left — then we have them in the rear. [*They gallop off.*

First Imperialist (*descending*). This is a bad business — Michael! — He answers not — Michael, they are gone! (*Goes toward the marsh.*) Alas, he is sunk! — Michael! — He hears me not: he is suffocated. — Poor coward, art thou done for? — We are slain — Enemies! Enemies on all sides!

Reënter Goetz *and* George *on horseback.*

Goetz. Yield thee, fellow, or thou diest!

Imperialist. Spare my life!

Goetz. Thy sword! — George, lead him to the other prisoners, whom Lerse is guarding yonder in the wood — I must pursue their fugitive leader. [*Exit.*

Imperialist. What has become of the knight, our officer?

George. My master struck him head over heels from his horse, so that his plume stuck in the mire. His troopers got him up, and off they were as if the Devil were behind them. [*Exeunt.*

Scene VIII. — *Camp of the Imperialists.*

Captain *and* First Officer.

First Officer. They flee from afar toward the camp.

Captain. He is most likely hard at their heels — Draw out fifty as far as the mill: if he follows up the pursuit too far, you may perhaps entrap him.

[*Exit* Officer.

The Second Officer *is borne in.*

Captain. How now, my young sir — have you got a cracked headpiece?

Officer. A plague upon you! The stoutest helmet went to shivers like glass. The demon! — he ran upon me as if he would strike me into the earth!

CAPTAIN. Thank God that you have escaped with your life.

OFFICER. There is little left to be thankful for: two of my ribs are broken — where's the surgeon?

[*He is carried off.*

SCENE IX. — *Jaxthausen.*

Enter GOETZ *and* SELBITZ.

GOETZ. And what say you to the ban, Selbitz?

SELBITZ. 'Tis a trick of Weislingen's.

GOETZ. Do you think so?

SELBITZ. I do not think — I know it.

GOETZ. How so?

SELBITZ. He was at the diet, I tell thee, and near the emperor's person.

GOETZ. Well, then, we shall frustrate another of his schemes.

SELBITZ. I hope so.

GOETZ. We will away, and course these hares.

SCENE X. — *The Imperial Camp.*

CAPTAIN, OFFICERS, *and* FOLLOWERS.

CAPTAIN. We shall gain nothing at this work, sirs! He beats one troop after another; and whoever escapes death or captivity, would rather flee to Turkey than return to the camp. Thus our force diminishes daily. We must attack him once for all, and in earnest — I will go myself, and he shall find with whom he has to deal.

OFFICER. We are all content; but he is so well acquainted with the country, and knows every path and ravine so thoroughly, that he will be as difficult to find as a rat in a barn.

CAPTAIN. I warrant you we'll ferret him out. On toward Jaxthausen! Whether he like it or not, he must come to defend his castle.

OFFICER. Shall our whole force march?

CAPTAIN. Yes, certainly — do you know that a hundred of us are melted away already?

OFFICER. Then, let us away with speed, before the whole snowball dissolves; for this is warm work, and we stand here like butter in the sunshine.

[*Exeunt. A march sounded.*

SCENE XI. — *Mountains and a Wood.*

GOETZ, SELBITZ, *and* TROOPERS.

GOETZ. They are coming in full force. It was high time that Sickingen's troopers joined us.

SELBITZ. We will divide our party — I will take the left hand by the hill.

GOETZ. Good — and do thou, Lerse, lead fifty men straight through the wood on the right. They are coming across the heath — I will draw up opposite to them. George, stay by me — when you see them attack me, then fall upon their flank: we'll beat the knaves into a mummy — they little think we can face them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XII. — *A Heath. On one side an Eminence with a ruined Tower, on the other the Forest.*

Enter, marching, the CAPTAIN OF THE IMPERIALISTS *with* OFFICERS *and his* SQUADRON. — *Drums and standards.*

CAPTAIN. He halts upon the heath! that's too impudent. He shall smart for it — what! not fear the torrent that threatens to overwhelm him!

OFFICER. I had rather you did not head the troops: he looks as if he meant to plant the first that comes upon him in the mire with his head downmost. Prithee ride in the rear.

CAPTAIN. Not so.

OFFICER. I entreat you. You are the knot which unites this bundle of hazel-twigs: loose it, and he will break them separately like so many reeds.

CAPTAIN. Sound, trumpeter — and let us blow him to hell! [*A charge sounded. Exeunt in full career.*

SELBITZ, *with his* TROOPERS, *comes from behind the hill galloping.*

SELBITZ. Follow me! They shall wish that they could multiply their hands.

[*They gallop across the stage, et exeunt.*

Loud alarm. LERSE *and his party sally from the wood.*

LERSE. Ho! to the rescue! Goetz is almost surrounded. — Gallant Selbitz, thou hast cut thy way — we will sow the heath with these thistle-heads.

[*Gallop off.*

A loud alarm with shouting and firing for some minutes. SELBITZ *is borne in wounded, by two* TROOPERS.

SELBITZ. Leave me here, and hasten to Goetz.

FIRST TROOPER. Let us stay, sir — you need our aid.

SELBITZ. Get one of you on the watch-tower, and tell me how it goes.

FIRST TROOPER. How shall I get up?

SECOND TROOPER. Mount upon my shoulders — you can then reach the ruined part, and thence scramble up to the opening.

[FIRST TROOPER *gets up into the tower.*

FIRST TROOPER. Alas, sir!

SELBITZ. What seest thou ?

FIRST TROOPER. Your troopers fly toward the hill.

SELBITZ. Rascally cowards ! — I would that they stood their ground, and I had a ball through my head. — Ride, one of you, full speed — Curse and thunder them back to the field — Seest thou Goetz ?

[*Exit* SECOND TROOPER.

TROOPER. I see his three black feathers floating in the midst of the wavy tumult.

SELBITZ. Swim, brave swimmer — I lie here.

TROOPER. A white plume — whose is that ?

SELBITZ. The captain's.

TROOPER. Goetz gallops upon him — crash ! Down he goes.

SELBITZ. The captain ?

TROOPER. Yes, sir.

SELBITZ. Hurrah ! Hurrah !

TROOPER. Alas ! alas ! I see Goetz no more.

SELBITZ. Then die, Selbitz !

TROOPER. A dreadful tumult where he stood — George's blue plume vanishes too.

SELBITZ. Come down ! Dost thou not see Lerse ?

TROOPER. No. — Everything is in confusion.

SELBITZ. No more. Come down. — How do Sickingen's men bear themselves ?

TROOPER. Well ; one of them flies to the wood — another — another — a whole troop. Goetz is lost !

SELBITZ. Come down.

TROOPER. I cannot — Hurrah ! hurrah ! I see Goetz, I see George.

SELBITZ. On horseback ?

TROOPER. Ay, ay, high on horseback — Victory ! victory ! — they flee.

SELBITZ. The Imperialists ?

TROOPER. Yes, standard and all, Goetz behind them. They disperse — Goetz reaches the ensign — he seizes the standard : he halts. A handful of men

rally round him — My comrade reaches him — they come this way.

Enter GOETZ, GEORGE, LERSE, *and* TROOPERS, *on horseback.*

SELBITZ. Joy to thee, Goetz! — Victory! victory!

GOETZ (*dismounting*). Dearly, dearly bought. Thou art wounded, Selbitz!

SELBITZ. But thou dost live and hast conquered! I have done little; and my dogs of troopers! How hast thou come off?

GOETZ. For the present, well! And here I thank George, and thee, Lerse, for my life. I unhorsed the captain: they stabbed my horse, and pressed me hard. George cut his way to me, and sprang off his horse. I threw myself like lightning upon it, and he appeared suddenly like a thunderbolt upon another. How camest thou by thy steed?

GEORGE. A fellow struck at you from behind: as he raised his cuirass in the act, I stabbed him with my dagger. Down he came; and so I rid you of an enemy, and helped myself to a horse.

GOETZ. There we held together till Francis here came to our help, and thereupon we mowed our way out.

LERSE. The hounds whom I led were to have mowed their way in, till our scythes met; but they fled like Imperialists.

GOETZ. Friend and foe all fled, except this little band who protected my rear. I had enough to do with the fellows in front, but the fall of their captain dismayed them: they wavered and fled. I have their banner, and a few prisoners.

SELBITZ. The captain has escaped you?

GOETZ. They rescued him in the scuffle. Come, lads, come, Selbitz. — Make a litter of lances and boughs: thou canst not mount a horse, come to my

castle. They are scattered, but we are very few; and I know not what troops they may have in reserve. I will be your host, my friends. Wine will taste well after such an action. [*Exeunt, carrying* SELBITZ.

SCENE XIII. — *The Camp.*

The CAPTAIN *and* IMPERIALISTS.

CAPTAIN. I could kill you all with my own hand. — What! to turn tail! He had not a handful of men left. To give way before one man! No one will believe it but those who wish to make a jest of us. Ride round the country, you, and you, and you: collect our scattered soldiers, or cut them down wherever you find them. We must grind these notches out of our blades, even should we spoil our swords in the operation. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XIV. — *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ, LERSE, *and* GEORGE.

GOETZ. We must not lose a moment. My poor fellows, I dare allow you no rest. Gallop round and strive to enlist troopers, appoint them to assemble at Weilern, where they will be most secure. Should we delay a moment, they will be before the castle. — (*Exeunt* LERSE *and* GEORGE.) — I must send out a scout. This begins to grow warm. — If we had but brave foemen to deal with! But these fellows are formidable only through their number. [*Exit.*

Enter SICKINGEN *and* MARIA.

MARIA. I beseech thee, dear Sickingen, do not leave my brother! His horsemen, your own, and those of Selbitz, all are scattered: he is alone. Selbitz

has been carried home to his castle wounded. I fear the worst.

SICKINGEN. Be comforted: I will not leave him.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Come to the chapel, the priest waits: in a few minutes you shall be united.

SICKINGEN. Let me remain with you.

GOETZ. You must come now to the chapel.

SICKINGEN. Willingly! — and then —

GOETZ. Then you go your way.

SICKINGEN. Goetz!

GOETZ. Will you not to the chapel?

SICKINGEN. Come, come! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XV. — *Camp.*

CAPTAIN *and* OFFICERS.

CAPTAIN. How many are we in all?

OFFICER. A hundred and fifty —

CAPTAIN. Out of four hundred. — That is bad. Set out for Jaxthausen at once, before he recovers, and attacks us once more.

SCENE XVI. — *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ, ELIZABETH, MARIA, *and* SICKINGEN.

GOETZ. God bless you, give you happy days, and keep those for your children which he denies to you!

ELIZABETH. And may they be virtuous as you — then let come what will.

SICKINGEN. I thank you. — And you, my Maria! As I led you to the altar, so shall you lead me to happiness.

MARIA. Our pilgrimage will be together toward that distant and promised land.

GOETZ. A prosperous journey.

MARIA. That was not what I meant — we do not leave you.

GOETZ. You must, sister.

MARIA. You are very harsh, brother.

GOETZ. And you more affectionate than prudent.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE (*aside to* GOETZ). I can collect no troopers: one was inclined to come, but he changed his mind, and refused.

GOETZ (*to* GEORGE). 'Tis well, George. Fortune begins to look coldly on me. I foreboded it, however. (*Aloud.*) Sickingen, I entreat you, depart this very evening. Persuade Maria. — You are her husband: let her feel it. When women come across our undertakings, our enemies are more secure in the open field, than they would else be in their castles.

Enter a TROOPER.

TROOPER (*aside to* GOETZ). The Imperial squadron is in full and rapid march hither.

GOETZ. I have roused them with stripes of the rod! How many are they?

TROOPER. About two hundred. They can scarcely be six miles from us.

GOETZ. Have they passed the river yet?

TROOPER. No, my lord.

GOETZ. Had I but fifty men, they should not cross it. Hast thou seen Lerse?

TROOPER. No, my lord.

GOETZ. Tell all to hold themselves ready. We must part, dear friends. Weep on, my gentle Maria. Many a moment of happiness is yet in store for thee. It is better thou shouldst weep on thy wedding-day,

than that present joy should be the forerunner of future misery. Farewell, Maria! — Farewell, brother!

MARIA. I cannot leave you, sister. Dear brother, let us stay. Dost thou value my husband so little as to refuse his help in thy extremity?

GOETZ. Yes: it is gone far with me. Perhaps my fall is near. You are but beginning life, and should separate your lot from mine. I have ordered your horses to be saddled: you must away instantly.

MARIA. Brother! brother!

ELIZABETH (*to* SICKINGEN). Yield to his wishes. Speak to her.

SICKINGEN. Dear Maria! we must go.

MARIA. Thou too? My heart will break!

GOETZ. Then, stay. In a few hours my castle will be surrounded.

MARIA (*weeping bitterly*). Alas! alas!

GOETZ. We will defend ourselves as long as we can.

MARIA. Mother of God, have mercy upon us.

GOETZ. And at last we must die or surrender. Thy tears will then have involved thy noble husband in the same misfortune with me.

MARIA. Thou torturest me!

GOETZ. Remain! Remain! We shall be taken together! Sickingen, thou wilt fall with me into the pit, out of which I had hoped thou shouldst have helped me.

MARIA. We will away — Sister — sister!

GOETZ. Place her in safety, and then think of me.

SICKINGEN. Never will I repose a night by her side till I know thou art out of danger.

GOETZ. Sister! dear sister. [*Kisses her.*

SICKINGEN. Away! away!

GOETZ. Yet one moment! I shall see you again. Be comforted, we shall meet again. (*Exeunt* SICKINGEN *and* MARIA.) I urged her to depart — yet now that

she leaves me, what would I not give to detain her! Elizabeth, thou stayest with me.

ELIZABETH. Till death! [*Exit.*

GOETZ. Whom God loves, to him may He give such a wife.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. They are near! I perceived them from the tower. The sun is rising, and I saw their lances glitter. I cared no more for them than a cat would for a whole army of mice. It is we, though, who act the rats in this play.

GOETZ. Look to the fastenings of the gates: barricade them with beams and stones. (*Exit* GEORGE.) We'll exercise their patience, and they may chew away their valour in biting their nails. (*A trumpet from without.* GOETZ *goes to the window.*) Aha! Here comes a red-coated rascal to ask me whether I will be a scoundrel! What says he? (*The voice of the* HERALD *is heard indistinctly, as from a distance.* GOETZ *mutters to himself.*) A rope for thy throat! (*Voice again.*) "Offended majesty!" — Some priest has drawn up that proclamation. (*Voice concludes, and* GOETZ *answers from the window.*) Surrender — surrender at discretion! With whom speak you? Am I a robber? Tell your captain, that for the emperor I entertain, as I have ever done, all due respect; but, as for him, he may —

[*Shuts the window with violence.*

SCENE XVII. — *The Kitchen.*

ELIZABETH *preparing food. Enter* GOETZ.

GOETZ. You have hard work, my poor wife!

ELIZABETH. Would it might last! But you can hardly hold out long.

GOETZ. We have not had time to provide ourselves.

ELIZABETH. And so many people as you have been wont to entertain. The wine is well-nigh finished.

GOETZ. If we can but hold out a certain time, they must propose a capitulation. We are doing them some damage, I promise you. They shoot the whole day, and only wound our walls and break our windows. Lerse is a gallant fellow. He slips about with his gun: if a rogue comes too nigh — Pop! there he lies!

[*Firing.*

Enter TROOPER.

TROOPER. We want live coals, precious lady!

GOETZ. For what?

TROOPER. Our bullets are spent: we must cast some new ones.

GOETZ. How goes it with the powder?

TROOPER. There is as yet no want: we save our fire.

[*Firing at intervals. Exeunt* GOETZ *and* ELIZABETH.

Enter LERSE *with a bullet-mould. Servants with coals.*

LERSE. Set them down, and then go and see for lead about the house: meanwhile I will make shift with this. (*Goes to the window, and takes out the leaden frames.*) Everything must be turned to account. So it is in this world — no one knows what a thing may come to: the glazier who made these frames little thought that the lead here was to give one of his grandsons his last headache; and the father that begot me little knew whether the fowls of heaven or the worms of the earth would pick my bones.

Enter GEORGE *with a leaden spout.*

GEORGE. Here's lead for thee! If you hit with only half of it, not one will return to tell his Majesty "Thy servants have sped ill!"

LERSE (*cutting it down*). A famous piece!

GEORGE. The rain must seek some other way. I'm not afraid of it — a brave trooper and a smart shower will always find their road. [*They cast balls.*

LERSE. Hold the ladle. (*Goes to the window.*) Yonder is a fellow creeping about with his rifle: he thinks our fire is spent. He shall have a bullet warm from the pan. [*He loads his rifle.*

GEORGE (*puts down the mould*). Let me see.

LERSE. (*Fires.*) There lies the game!

GEORGE. He fired at me as I stepped out on the roof to get the lead. He killed a pigeon that sat near me: it fell into the spout. I thanked him for my dinner, and went back with the double booty.

[*They cast balls.*

LERSE. Now let us load, and go through the castle to earn our dinner.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Stay, Lerse, I must speak with thee. I will not keep thee, George, from the sport.

[*Exit* GEORGE.

GOETZ. They offer terms.

LERSE. I will go and hear what they have to say.

GOETZ. They will require me to enter myself into ward in some town on my knightly parole.

LERSE. That won't do. Suppose they allow us free liberty of departure? for we can expect no relief from Sickingen. We will bury all the valuables where no divining-rod shall find them; leave them the bare walls, and come out with flying colours.

GOETZ. They will not permit us.

LERSE. It is worth the asking. We will demand a safe conduct, and I will sally out.

Scene XVIII. — *A Hall.*

Goetz, Elizabeth, George, *and* Troopers *at table.*

Goetz. Danger unites us, my friends! Be of good cheer: don't forget the bottle! The flask is empty. Come, another, dear wife! (Elizabeth *shakes her head.*) Is there no more?

Elizabeth (*aside*). Only one, which I have set apart for you.

Goetz. Not so, my love! Bring it out: they need strengthening more than I, for it is my quarrel.

Elizabeth. Fetch it from the cupboard.

Goetz. It is the last, and I feel as if we need not spare it. It is long since I have been so merry. (*They fill.*) To the health of the emperor!

All. Long live the emperor!

Goetz. Be it our last word when we die! I love him, for our fate is similar; but I am happier than he. To please the princes, he must direct his imperial squadrons against mice, while the rats gnaw his possessions. — I know he often wishes himself dead, rather than to be any longer the soul of such a crippled body. (*They fill.*) It will just go once more round. And when our blood runs low, like this flask; when we pour out its last ebbing drop (*empties the wine drop by drop into his goblet*), — what then shall be our cry?

George. Freedom for ever!

Goetz. Freedom for ever!

All. Freedom for ever!

Goetz. And, if that survive us, we can die happy; for our spirits shall see our children's children and their emperor happy! Did the servants of princes show the same filial attachment to their masters as you to me — did their masters serve the emperor as I would serve him —

GEORGE. Things would be widely different.

GOETZ. Not so much so as it would appear. Have I not known worthy men among the princes? And can the race be extinct? Men, happy in their own minds and in their subjects, who could bear a free, noble brother in their neighbourhood without harbouring either fear or envy; whose hearts expanded when they saw their table surrounded by their free equals, and who did not think the knights unfit companions till they had degraded themselves by courtly homage.

GEORGE. Have you known such princes?

GOETZ. Ay, truly. As long as I live I shall recollect how the Landgrave of Hanau gave a grand hunting-party, and the princes and free feudatories dined under the open heaven, and the country people all thronged to see them: it was no selfish masquerade instituted for his own private pleasure or vanity. To see the great round-headed peasant lads and the pretty brown girls, the sturdy hinds, and the venerable old men, a crowd of happy faces, all as merry as if they rejoiced in the splendour of their master, which he shared with them under God's free sky!

GEORGE. He must have been as good a master as you.

GOETZ. And may we not hope that many such will rule together some future day, to whom reverence for the emperor, peace and friendship with their neighbours, and the love of their vassals, shall be the best and dearest family treasure handed down to their children's children? Every one will then keep and improve his own, instead of reckoning nothing as gain that is not stolen from his neighbours.

GEORGE. And should we have no more forays?

GOETZ. Would to God there were no restless spirits in all Germany! — we should still have enough to do! We would clear the mountains of wolves, and bring our peaceable laborious neighbour a dish of game from

the wood, and eat it together. Were that not full employment, we would join our brethren, and, like cherubims with flaming swords, defend the frontiers of the empire against those wolves the Turks, and those foxes the French, and guard for our beloved emperor both extremities of his extensive empire. That would be a life, George! To risk one's head for the safety of all Germany. (GEORGE *springs up.*) Whither away?

GEORGE. Alas! I forgot we were besieged — besieged by the very emperor; and, before we can expose our lives in his defence, we must risk them for our liberty.

GOETZ. Be of good cheer.

Enter LERSE.

LERSE. Freedom! freedom! The cowardly poltroons — the hesitating, irresolute asses. You are to depart with men, weapons, horses, and armour: provisions you are to leave behind.

GOETZ. They will hardly find enough to exercise their jaws.

LERSE (*aside to* GOETZ). Have you hidden the plate and money?

GOETZ. No! Wife, go with Lerse: he has something to tell thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XIX. — *The Court of the Castle.*

GEORGE (*in the stable. Sings*).

An urchin once, as I have heard,
Ha! ha!
Had caught and caged a little bird,
Sa! sa!
Ha! ha!
Sa! sa!

He viewed the prize with heart elate,
Ha! ha!
Thrust in his hand — ah, treacherous fate!
Sa! sa!
Ha! ha!
Sa! sa!
Away the titmouse winged its flight,
Ha! ha!
And laughed to scorn the silly wight,
Sa! sa!
Ha! ha!
Sa! sa!

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. How goes it?
GEORGE (*brings out his horse*). All saddled.
GOETZ. Thou art quick.
GEORGE. As the bird escaped from the cage.

Enter all the besieged.

GOETZ. Have you all your rifles? Not yet! Go, take the best from the armory; it is all one: we'll ride on in advance.

GEORGE (*sings*).

Ha! ha!
Sa! sa!
Ha! ha!

SCENE XX. — *The Armory.*

Two TROOPERS *choosing guns.*

FIRST TROOPER. I'll have this one.
SECOND TROOPER. And I this — but yonder's a better.

FIRST TROOPER. Never mind — make haste.

[*Tumult and firing without.*

SECOND TROOPER. Hark!

FIRST TROOPER (*springs to the window*). Good heavens, they are murdering our master! He is unhorsed! George is down.

SECOND TROOPER. How shall we get off? Over the wall by the walnut-tree, and into the field.

[*Exit.*

FIRST TROOPER. Lerse keeps his ground: I will to him. If they die, I will not survive them. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *An Inn in the City of Heilbronn.*

GOETZ (*solus*).

GOETZ. I am like the evil spirit whom the Capuchin conjured into a sack. I fret and labour, but all in vain. The perjured villains! (*Enter* ELIZABETH.) What news, Elizabeth, of my dear, my trusty followers?

ELIZABETH. Nothing certain: some are slain, some are prisoners; no one could or would tell me further particulars.

GOETZ. Is this the reward of fidelity, of filial obedience? — "That it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long in the land!"

ELIZABETH. Dear husband, murmur not against our heavenly Father. They have their reward. It was born with them, — a noble and generous heart. Even in the dungeon they are free. Pay attention to the imperial commissioners: their heavy gold chains become them —

GOETZ. As a necklace becomes a sow! I should like to see George and Lerse in fetters!

ELIZABETH. It were a sight to make angels weep.

GOETZ. I would not weep — I would clinch my teeth, and gnaw my lip in fury. What! in fetters? Had ye but loved me less, dear lads! I could never look at them enough . . . What! to break their word, pledged in the name of the emperor!

ELIZABETH. Put away these thoughts. Reflect: you must appear before the council — you are in no mood to meet them, and I fear the worst.

GOETZ. What harm can they do me?

ELIZABETH. Here comes the sergeant.

GOETZ. What! the ass of justice that carries the sacks to the mill and the dung to the field? What now?

Enter SERGEANT.

SERGEANT. The lords commissioners are at the Council House, and require your presence.

GOETZ. I come.

SERGEANT. I am to escort you.

GOETZ. Too much honour.

ELIZABETH. Be but cool.

GOETZ. Fear nothing. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *The Town House at Heilbronn.*

The IMPERIAL COMMISSIONERS *seated at a table. The* CAPTAIN *and the* MAGISTRATES *of the city attending.*

MAGISTRATE. In pursuance of your order, we have collected the stoutest and most determined of our citizens. They are at hand, in order, at a nod from you, to seize Berlichingen.

COMMISSIONER. We shall have much pleasure in communicating to his Imperial Majesty the zeal with which you have obeyed his illustrious commands. — Are they artisans?

MAGISTRATE. Smiths, coopers, and carpenters, men with hands hardened by labour; and resolute here.

[*Points to his breast.*

COMMISSIONER. 'Tis well.

Enter SERGEANT.

SERGEANT. Goetz von Berlichingen waits without.

COMMISSIONER. Admit him.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. God save you, sirs! What would you with me?

COMMISSIONER. First, that you consider where you are, and in whose presence.

GOETZ. By my faith, I know you right well, sirs.

COMMISSIONER. You acknowledge allegiance.

GOETZ. With all my heart.

COMMISSIONER. Be seated.

GOETZ. What, down there? I'd rather stand. That stool smells so of poor sinners, as indeed does the whole apartment.

COMMISSIONER. Stand, then.

GOETZ. To business, if you please.

COMMISSIONER. We shall proceed in due order.

GOETZ. I am glad to hear it. Would you had always done so.

COMMISSIONER. You know how you fell into our hands, and are a prisoner at discretion.

GOETZ. What will you give me to forget it?

COMMISSIONER. Could I give you modesty, I should better your affairs.

GOETZ. Better my affairs! could you but do that! To repair is more difficult than to destroy.

SECRETARY. Shall I put all this on record?

COMMISSIONER. Only what is to the purpose.

GOETZ. You may put it in print, if you like: what do I care!

COMMISSIONER. You fell into the power of the emperor, whose paternal goodness got the better of his justice, and, instead of throwing you into a dungeon, ordered you to repair to his beloved city of Heilbronn. You gave your knightly parole to appear, and await the termination in all humility.

GOETZ. Well: I am here, and await it.

COMMISSIONER. And we are here to intimate to you his Imperial Majesty's mercy and clemency. He is pleased to forgive your rebellion, to release you from the ban and all well-merited punishment, provided you do, with becoming humility, receive his bounty, and subscribe to the articles which shall be read unto you.

GOETZ. I am his Majesty's faithful servant, as ever. One word ere you proceed. My people — where are they? What will be done with them?

COMMISSIONER. That concerns you not.

GOETZ. So may the emperor turn his face from you in the hour of your need. They were my comrades, and are so now. What have you done with them?

COMMISSIONER. We are not bound to account to you.

GOETZ. Ah! I forgot that you are not even pledged to perform what you have promised, much less —

COMMISSIONER. Our business is, to lay the articles before you. Submit yourself to the emperor, and you may find a way to petition for the life and freedom of your comrades.

GOETZ. Your paper.

COMMISSIONER. Secretary, read it.

SECRETARY (*reads*). "I, Goetz of Berlichingen, make public acknowledgment, by these presents, that I, having lately risen in rebellion against the emperor and empire — "

GOETZ. 'Tis false! I am no rebel, I have committed no offence against the emperor, and with the empire I have no concern.

COMMISSIONER. Be silent, and hear further.

GOETZ. I will hear no further. Let any one arise and bear witness. Have I ever taken one step against the emperor, or against the house of Austria? Has not the whole tenor of my conduct proved that I feel better than any one else what all Germany owes to its head, and especially what the free knights and feudatories owe to their liege lord the emperor? I should be a villain could I be induced to subscribe that paper.

COMMISSIONER. Yet we have strict orders to try and persuade you by fair means, or, in case of your refusal, to throw you into prison.

GOETZ. Into prison! — Me?

COMMISSIONER. Where you may expect your fate from the hands of justice, since you will not take it from those of mercy.

GOETZ. To prison! You abuse the imperial power! To prison! That was not the emperor's command. What, ye traitors, to dig a pit for me, and hang out your oath, your knightly honour, as the bait! To promise me permission to ward myself on parole, and then again to break your treaty!

COMMISSIONER. We owe no faith to robbers.

GOETZ. Wert thou not the representative of my sovereign, whom I respect even in the vilest counterfeit, thou shouldst swallow that word, or choke upon it. I was engaged in an honourable feud. Thou mightest thank God, and magnify thyself before the world, hadst thou ever done as gallant a deed as that with which I now stand charged. (*The* COMMISSIONER *makes a sign to the* MAGISTRATE *of Heilbronn, who rings a bell.*) Not for the sake of paltry gain, not to wrest followers or lands from the weak and the defenceless, have I sallied forth. To rescue my page and defend my own person — see ye any rebellion in that? The emperor and his magnates, reposing on their pillows, would never

Goetz Resists Arrest

Photogravure from the painting by L. Knupfer, in Dusseldorf Gallery

have felt our need. I have, God be praised, one hand left; and I have done well to use it.

Enter a party of Artisans armed with halberds and swords.

GOETZ. What means this?

COMMISSIONER. You will not listen. — Seize him!

GOETZ. Let none come near me who is not a very Hungarian ox. One salutation from my iron fist shall cure him of headache, toothache, and every other ache under the wide heaven! (*They rush upon him. He strikes one down, and snatches a sword from another. They stand aloof.*) Come on! come on! I should like to become acquainted with the bravest among you.

COMMISSIONER. Surrender!

GOETZ. With a sword in my hand! Know ye not that it depends but upon myself to make way through all these hares and gain the open field? But I will teach you how a man should keep his word. Promise me but free ward, and I will give up my sword, and am again your prisoner.

COMMISSIONER. How! Would you treat with the emperor, sword in hand?

GOETZ. God forbid! — only with you and your worthy fraternity! You may go home, good people: you are only losing your time, and here there is nothing to be got but bruises.

COMMISSIONER. Seize him! What! does not your love for the emperor supply you with courage?

GOETZ. No more than the emperor supplies them with plaster for the wounds their courage would earn them.

Enter SERGEANT *hastily.*

OFFICER. The warder has just discovered, from the castle tower, a troop of more than two hundred horse-

men hastening toward the town. Unperceived by us, they have pressed forward from behind the hill, and threaten our walls.

COMMISSIONER. Alas! alas! What can this mean?

A SOLDIER *enters.*

SOLDIER. Francis of Sickingen waits at the drawbridge, and informs you that he has heard how perfidiously you have broken your word to his brother-in-law, and how the Council of Heilbronn have aided and abetted in the treason. He is now come to insist upon justice, and, if refused it, threatens, within an hour, to fire the four quarters of your town, and abandon it to be plundered by his vassals.

GOETZ. My gallant brother!

COMMISSIONER. Withdraw, Goetz. (*Exit* GOETZ.) What is to be done?

MAGISTRATE. Have compassion upon us and our town! Sickingen is inexorable in his wrath: he will keep his word.

COMMISSIONER. Shall we forget what is due to ourselves and the emperor?

CAPTAIN. If we had but men to enforce it; but, situated as we are, a show of resistance would only make matters worse. It is better for us to yield.

MAGISTRATE. Let us apply to Goetz to put in a good word for us. I feel as though I saw the town already in flames.

COMMISSIONER. Let Goetz approach. (*Enter* GOETZ.)

GOETZ. What now?

COMMISSIONER. Thou wilt do well to dissuade thy brother-in-law from his rebellious interference. Instead of rescuing thee, he will only plunge thee deeper in destruction, and become the companion of thy fall!

GOETZ (*sees Elizabeth at the door, and speaks to her aside*). Go, tell him instantly to break in and force his way hither, but to spare the town. As for these

rascals, if they offer any resistance, let him use force. I care not if I lose my life, provided they are all knocked on the head at the same time.

SCENE III. — *A large Hall in the Council-House, beset by* SICKINGEN'S *Troops.*

Enter SICKINGEN *and* GOETZ.

GOETZ. That was help from heaven. How camest thou so opportunely and unexpectedly, brother?

SICKINGEN. Without witchcraft. I had despatched two or three messengers to learn how it fared with thee: when I heard of the perjury of these fellows, I set out instantly; and now we have them safe.

GOETZ. I ask nothing but knightly ward upon my parole.

SICKINGEN. You are too noble. Not even to avail yourself of the advantage which the honest man has over the perjurer! They are in the wrong, and we will not give them cushions to sit upon. They have shamefully abused the imperial authority; and, if I know anything of the emperor, you might safely insist upon more favourable terms. You ask too little.

GOETZ. I have ever been content with little.

SICKINGEN. And therefore that little has always been denied thee. My proposal is, that they shall release your servants, and permit you all to return to your castle on parole — you can promise not to leave it till the emperor's pleasure be known. You will be safer there than here.

GOETZ. They will say my property is escheated to the emperor.

SICKINGEN. Then we will answer, thou canst dwell there, and keep it for his service till he restores it to thee again. Let them wriggle like eels in the net,

they shall not escape us! They may talk of the imperial dignity — of their commission. We will not mind that. I know the emperor, and have some influence with him. He has ever wished to have thee in his service. You will not be long in your castle without being summoned to serve him.

GOETZ. God grant it, ere I forget the use of arms!

SICKINGEN. Valour can never be forgotten, as it can never be learnt. Fear nothing! When thy affairs are settled, I will repair to court, where my enterprises begin to ripen. Good fortune seems to smile on them. I want only to sound the emperor's mind. The towns of Triers and Pfalz as soon expect that the sky should fall, as that I shall come down upon their heads. But I will come like a hail-storm! and, if I am successful, thou shalt soon be brother to an elector. I had hoped for thy assistance in this undertaking.

GOETZ (*looks at his hand*). Oh! that explains the dream I had the night before I promised Maria to Weislingen. I thought he vowed eternal fidelity, and held my iron hand so fast that it loosened from the arm. Alas! I am at this moment more defenceless than when it was shot away. Weislingen! Weislingen!

SICKINGEN. Forget the traitor! We will thwart his plans, and undermine his authority, till shame and remorse shall gnaw him to death. I see, I see the downfall of our enemies. — Goetz, only other six months!

GOETZ. Thy soul soars high! I know not why, but for some time past no fair prospects have dawned upon me. I have been ere now in sore distress — I have been a prisoner before — but never did I experience such a depression.

SICKINGEN. Success gives courage. Come, let us to the bigwigs. They have had time enough for holding forth: let us for once take the trouble upon ourselves. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *The Castle of Adelaide, Augsburg.*

ADELAIDE *and* WEISLINGEN *discovered.*

ADELAIDE. This is detestable.

WEISLINGEN. I have gnashed my teeth. So good a plan — so well followed out — and, after all, to leave him in possession of his castle! That cursed Sickingen!

ADELAIDE. The council should not have consented.

WEISLINGEN. They were in the net. What else could they do? Sickingen threatened them with fire and sword — the haughty, vindictive man! I hate him! His power waxes like a mountain torrent — let it but gain a few brooks, and others come pouring to its aid.

ADELAIDE. Have they no emperor?

WEISLINGEN. My dear wife, he waxes old and feeble: he is only the shadow of what he was. When he heard what had been done, and I and the other counsellors murmured indignantly, "Let them alone!" said he: "I can spare my old Goetz his little fortress; and, if he remains quiet there, what have you to say against him?" We spoke of the welfare of the state: "Oh," said he, "that I had always had counsellors who would have urged my restless spirit to consult more the happiness of individuals!"

ADELAIDE. He has lost the spirit of a prince!

WEISLINGEN. We inveighed against Sickingen! — "He is my faithful servant," said he: "and, if he has not acted by my express order, he has performed better what I wished than my plenipotentiaries; and I can ratify what he has done as well after as before."

ADELAIDE. 'Tis enough to drive one mad.

WEISLINGEN. Yet I have not given up all hope. Goetz is on parole to remain quiet in his castle. 'Tis

impossible for him to keep his promise, and we shall soon have some new cause of complaint.

ADELAIDE. That is the more likely, as we may hope that the old emperor will soon leave the world; and Charles, his gallant successor, will display a more princely mind.

WEISLINGEN. Charles! He is neither chosen nor crowned.

ADELAIDE. Who does not expect and hope for that event?

WEISLINGEN. You have a great idea of his abilities: one might almost think you looked on him with partial eyes.

ADELAIDE. You insult me, Weislingen. For what do you take me?

WEISLINGEN. I do not mean to offend, but I cannot be silent upon the subject. Charles's marked attentions to you disquiet me.

ADELAIDE. And do I receive them as —

WEISLINGEN. You are a woman, and no woman hates those who pay their court to her.

ADELAIDE. This from you!

WEISLINGEN. It cuts me to the heart — the dreadful thought — Adelaide.

ADELAIDE. Can I not cure thee of this folly?

WEISLINGEN. If thou wouldst — Thou canst leave the court.

ADELAIDE. But upon what pretence? Art thou not here? Must I leave you and all my friends, to shut myself up with the owls in your solitary castle? No, Weislingen, that will never do: be at rest, thou knowest I love thee.

WEISLINGEN. That is my anchor so long as the cable holds. [*Exit.*

ADELAIDE. Ah! It is come to this? This was yet wanting. The projects of my bosom are too great to brook the interruption. Charles — the great, the gal-

lant Charles — the future emperor — shall he be the only man unrewarded by my favour? Think not, Weislingen, to hinder me — else shalt thou to earth: my way lies over thee!

Enter FRANCIS (*with a letter*).

FRANCIS. Here, gracious lady.

ADELAIDE. Hadst thou it from Charles's own hand?

FRANCIS. Yes.

ADELAIDE. What ails thee? Thou lookest so mournful!

FRANCIS. It is your pleasure that I should pine away, and waste my fairest years in agonising despair.

ADELAIDE (*aside*). I pity him; and how little would it cost me to make him happy! (*Aloud.*) Be of good courage, youth! I know thy love and fidelity, and will not be ungrateful.

FRANCIS (*with stifled breath*). If thou wert capable of ingratitude, I could not survive it. There boils not a drop of blood in my veins but what is thine own — I have not a single feeling but to love and to serve thee!

ADELAIDE. Dear Francis!

FRANCIS. You flatter me. (*Bursts into tears.*) Does my attachment deserve only to be a stepping-stool to another, — to see all your thoughts fixed upon Charles?

ADELAIDE. You know not what you wish, and still less what you say.

FRANCIS (*stamping with vexation and rage*). No more will I be your slave, your go-between!

ADELAIDE. Francis, you forget yourself.

FRANCIS. To sacrifice my beloved master and myself —

ADELAIDE. Out of my sight!

FRANCIS. Gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. Go, betray to thy beloved master the secret of my soul! Fool that I was to take thee for what thou art not!

FRANCIS. Dear lady! you know how I love you.

ADELAIDE. And thou, who wast my friend — so near my heart — go, betray me.

FRANCIS. Rather would I tear my heart from my breast! Forgive me, gentle lady! my heart is too full, my senses desert me.

ADELAIDE. Thou dear, affectionate boy! (*She takes him by both hands, draws him toward her, and kisses him. He throws himself weeping upon her neck.*) Leave me!

FRANCIS (*his voice choked by tears*). Heavens!

ADELAIDE. Leave me! The walls are traitors. Leave me! (*Breaks from him.*) Be but steady in fidelity and love, and the fairest reward is thine.

[*Exit.*

FRANCIS. The fairest reward! let me but live till that moment — I could murder my father, were he an obstacle to my happiness! [*Exit.*

SCENE V. — *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ *seated at a table with writing materials.* ELIZABETH *beside him with her work.*

GOETZ. This idle life does not suit me. My confinement becomes more irksome every day: I would I could sleep, or persuade myself that quiet is agreeable.

ELIZABETH. Continue writing the account of thy deeds which thou hast commenced. Give into the hands of thy friends evidence to put thine enemies to shame: make a noble posterity acquainted with thy real character.

GOETZ. Alas! writing is but busy idleness: it wearies me. While I am writing what I have done, I lament the misspent time in which I might do more.

ELIZABETH (*takes the writing*). Be not impatient. Thou hast got as far as thy first imprisonment at Heilbronn.

GOETZ. That was always an unlucky place to me.

ELIZABETH (*reads*). "There were even some of the confederates who told me that I had acted foolishly in appearing before my bitterest enemies, who, as I might suspect, would not deal justly with me." And what didst thou answer? Write on.

GOETZ. I said, "Have I not often risked life and limb for the welfare and property of others, and shall I not do so for the honour of my knightly word?"

ELIZABETH. Thus does fame speak of thee.

GOETZ. They shall not rob me of my honour. They have taken all else from me, — property — liberty — everything.

ELIZABETH. I happened once to stand in an inn near the Lords of Miltenberg and Singlingen, who knew me not. Then I was joyful as at the birth of my first-born; for they extolled thee to each other, and said, "He is the mirror of knighthood, noble and merciful in prosperity, dauntless and true in misfortune."

GOETZ. Let them show me the man to whom I have broken my word. Heaven knows, my ambition has ever been to labour for my neighbour more than for myself, and to acquire the fame of a gallant and irreproachable knight, rather than principalities or power; and, God be praised! I have gained the meed of my labour.

Enter GEORGE *and* LERSE *with game.*

GOETZ. Good luck to my gallant huntsmen!

GEORGE. Such have we become from gallant troopers. Boots can easily be cut down into buskins.

LERSE. The chase is always something — 'tis a kind of war.

GEORGE. Yes; if we were not always crossed by these imperial gamekeepers. Don't you recollect, my lord, how you prophesied we should become huntsmen when the world was turned topsy-turvy? We are become so now without waiting for that.

GOETZ. 'Tis all the same: we are pushed out of our sphere.

GEORGE. These are wonderful times! For eight days a dreadful comet has been seen: all Germany fears that it portends the death of the emperor, who is very ill.

GOETZ. Very ill! Then, our career draws to a close.

LERSE. And in the neighbourhood there are terrible commotions: the peasants have made a formidable insurrection.

GOETZ. Where?

LERSE. In the heart of Swabia: they are plundering, burning, and slaying. I fear they will sack the whole country.

GEORGE. It is a horrible warfare! They have already risen in a hundred places, and daily increase in number. A hurricane, too, has lately torn up whole forests; and, in the place where the insurrection began, two fiery swords have been seen in the sky crossing each other.

GOETZ. Then, some of my poor friends and neighbours no doubt suffer innocently.

GEORGE. Alas! that we are pent up thus!

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *A Village plundered by the insurgent Peasantry. Shrieks and tumult. Women, old Men, and Children fly across the Stage.*

OLD MAN. Away! away! let us fly from the murdering dogs.

WOMAN. Sacred heaven! How blood-red is the sky! how blood-red the setting sun!

ANOTHER. That must be fire.

A THIRD. My husband! my husband!

OLD MAN. Away! away! To the wood! [*Exeunt.*

Enter LINK *and Insurgents.*

LINK. Whoever opposes you, down with him! The village is ours. Let none of the booty be injured, none be left behind. Plunder clean and quickly. We must soon set fire —

Enter METZLER, *coming down the hill.*

METZLER. How do things go with you, Link?

LINK. Merrily enough, as you see: you are just in time for the fun. — Whence come you?

METZLER. From Weinsberg. There was a jubilee.

LINK. How so?

METZLER. We stabbed them all, in such heaps, it was a joy to see it!

LINK. All whom?

METZLER. Dietrich von Weiler led up the dance. The fool! We were all raging round the church-steeple. He looked out, and wished to treat with us. — Baf! A ball through his head! Up we rushed like a tempest, and the fellow soon made his exit by the window.

LINK. Huzza!

METZLER (*to the peasants*). Ye dogs, must I find you legs? How they gape and loiter, the asses!

LINK. Set fire! Let them roast in the flames! forward! Push on, ye dolts.

METZLER. Then we brought out Helfenstein, Eltershofen, thirteen of the nobility, — eighty in all. They were led out on the plain before Heilbronn. What a shouting and jubilee among our lads as the long row of miserable sinners passed by! they stared at each other; and, heaven and earth! we surrounded them before they were aware, and then despatched them all with our pikes.

LINK. Why was I not there?

METZLER. Never in all my life did I see such fun.

LINK. On! on! Bring all out!

PEASANT. All's clear.

LINK. Then, fire the village at the four corners.

METZLER. 'Twill make a fine bonfire! Hadst thou but seen how the fellows tumbled over one another, and croaked like frogs! It warmed my heart like a cup of brandy. One Rexinger was there, a fellow with a white plume and flaxen locks, who, when he went out hunting, used to drive us before him like dogs, and with dogs. I had not caught sight of him all the while, when suddenly his fool's visage looked me full in the face. Push! went the spear between his ribs, and there he lay stretched on all-fours above his companions. The fellows lay kicking in a heap like the hares that used to be driven together at their grand hunting-parties.

LINK. It smokes finely already!

METZLER. Yonder it burns! Come, let us with the booty to the main body.

LINK. Where do they halt?

METZLER. Between this and Heilbronn. They wish to choose a captain whom every one will respect, for

we are after all only their equals: they feel this, and turn restive.

LINK. Whom do they propose?

METZLER. Maximilian Stumf, or Goetz von Berlichingen.

LINK. That would be well. 'Twould give the thing credit should Goetz accept it. He has ever been held a worthy, independent knight. Away, away! We march toward Heilbronn! Pass the word.

METZLER. The fire will light us a good part of the way. Hast thou seen the great comet?

LINK. Yes. It is a dreadful ghastly sign! As we march by night we can see it well. It rises about one o'clock.

METZLER. And is visible but for an hour and a quarter, like an arm brandishing a sword, and bloody red!

LINK. Didst thou mark the three stars at the sword's hilt and point?

METZLER. And the broad haze-coloured stripe illuminated by a thousand streamers like lances, and between them little swords.

LINK. I shuddered with horror. The sky was pale red, streaked with ruddy flames, and among them grisly figures with shaggy hairs and beards.

METZLER. Did you see them too? And how they all swam about as though in a sea of blood, and struggled in confusion, enough to turn one's brain!

LINK. Away! away! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Open Country. In the distance two Villages and an Abbey are burning.*

KOHL, WILD, MAXIMILIAN STUMF, *Insurgents.*

STUMF. You cannot ask me to be your leader; it were bad for you and for me; I am a vassal of the

palsgrave, and how shall I make war against my liege lord? Besides, you would always suspect I did not act from my heart.

KOHL. We knew well thou wouldst make some excuse.

Enter GEORGE, LERSE, *and* GOETZ.

GOETZ. What would you with me?

KOHL. You must be our captain.

GOETZ. How can I break my knightly word to the emperor? I am under the ban: I cannot quit my territory.

WILD. That's no excuse.

GOETZ. And were I free, and you wanted to deal with the lords and nobles as you did at Weinsberg, laying waste the country round with fire and sword, and should wish me to be an abettor of your shameless, barbarous doings, rather than be your captain, you should slay me like a mad dog!

KOHL. What has been done cannot be undone.

STUMF. That was just the misfortune, that they had no leader whom they honoured, and who could bridle their fury. I beseech thee, Goetz, accept the office! The princes will be grateful: all Germany will thank thee. It will be for the weal and prosperity of all. The country and its inhabitants will be preserved.

GOETZ. Why dost not thou accept it?

STUMF. I have given them reasons for my refusal.

KOHL. We have no time to waste in useless speeches. Once for all! Goetz, be our chief, or look to thy castle and thy head! Take two hours to consider of it. Guard him!

GOETZ. To what purpose? I am as resolved now as I shall ever be. Why have ye risen up in arms? If to recover your rights and freedom, why do you plunder and lay waste the land? Will you abstain

from such evil doings, and act as true men who know what they want? Then will I be your chief for eight days, and help you in your lawful and orderly demands.

WILD. What has been done was done in the first heat, and thy interference is not needed to prevent it for the future.

KOHL. Thou must engage with us at least for a quarter of a year.

STUMF. Say four weeks: that will satisfy both parties.

KOHL. Your hand!

GOETZ. But you must promise to send the treaty you have made with me in writing to all your troops, and to punish severely those who infringe it.

WILD. Well, it shall be done.

GOETZ. Then, I bind myself to you for four weeks.

STUMF. Good fortune to you! In whatever thou doest, spare our noble lord the palsgrave.

KOHL (*aside*). See that none speak to him without our knowledge.

GOETZ. Lerse, go to my wife. Protect her: you shall have news of me.

[*Exeunt* GOETZ, STUMF, LERSE, *and some* PEASANTS.

Enter METZLER, LINK, *and their followers.*

METZLER. Who talks of a treaty? What's the use of a treaty?

LINK. It is shameful to make any such bargain!

KOHL. We know as well what we want as you, and we may do or let alone what we please.

WILD. This raging and burning and murdering must have an end some day or other; and, by renouncing it just now, we gain a brave leader.

METZLER. How? An end? Thou traitor! why are we here but to avenge ourselves on our enemies,

and enrich ourselves at their expense? Some prince's slave has been tampering with thee.

KOHL. Come, Wild: he is like a brute-beast.

[*Exeunt* WILD *and* KOHL.

METZLER. Ay, go your way: no band will stick by you. The villains! Link, we'll set on the others to burn Miltenberg yonder; and, if they begin a quarrel about the treaty, we'll cut off the heads of those that made it.

LINK. We have still the greater body of peasants on our side. [*Exeunt with* INSURGENTS.

SCENE III. — *A Hill, and Prospect of the Country. In the flat scene a Mill. A body of Horsemen.*

WEISLINGEN *comes out of the Mill, followed by* FRANCIS *and a* COURIER.

WEISLINGEN. My horse! Have you announced it to the other nobles?

COURIER. At least seven standards will meet you in the wood behind Miltenberg. The peasants are marching in that direction. Couriers are despatched on all sides: the entire confederacy will soon be assembled. Our plan cannot fail, and they say there is dissension among them.

WEISLINGEN. So much the better. Francis!

FRANCIS. Gracious sir!

WEISLINGEN. Discharge thine errand punctually. I bind it upon thy soul. Give her the letter. She shall from the court to my castle instantly. Thou must see her depart, and bring me notice of it.

FRANCIS. Your commands shall be obeyed.

WEISLINGEN. Tell her she *shall* go. (*To the* COURIER.) Lead us by the nearest and best road.

COURIER. We must go round: all the rivers are swollen with the late heavy rains.

Scene IV. — *Jaxthausen.*

Elizabeth *and* Lerse.

Lerse. Gracious lady, be comforted!

Elizabeth. Alas! Lerse, the tears stood in his eyes when he took leave of me. It is dreadful, dreadful!

Lerse. He will return.

Elizabeth. It is not that. When he went forth to gain honourable victories, never did grief sit heavy at my heart. I then rejoiced in the prospect of his return, which I now dread.

Lerse. So noble a man.

Elizabeth. Call him not so. There lies the new misery. The miscreants! they threatened to murder his family and burn his castle. Should he return, gloomy, most gloomy, shall I see his brow. His enemies will forge scandalous accusations against him, which he will be unable to refute.

Lerse. He will and can.

Elizabeth. He has broken his parole. — Canst thou deny that?

Lerse. No! he was constrained: what reason is there to condemn him?

Elizabeth. Malice seeks not reasons, but pretexts. He has become an ally of rebels, malefactors, and murderers: — he has become their chief. Say No to that.

Lerse. Cease to torment yourself and me. Have they not solemnly sworn to abjure all such doings as those at Weinsberg? Did not I myself hear them say, in remorse, that, had not that been done already, it never should have been done? Must not the princes and nobles return him their best thanks for having undertaken the dangerous office of leading these unruly

people, in order to restrain their rage, and to save so many lives and possessions?

ELIZABETH. Thou art an affectionate pleader. Should they take him prisoner, deal with him as with a rebel, and bring his gray hairs . . . Lerse, I should go mad.

LERSE. Send sleep to refresh her body, dear Father of mankind, if thou deniest comfort to her soul.

ELIZABETH. George has promised to bring news, but he will not be allowed to do so. They are worse than prisoners. Well I know they are watched like enemies. — The gallant boy! he would not leave his master.

LERSE. The very heart within me bled when he bade me leave him. — Had you not needed my help, all the terrors of grisly death should not have separated us.

ELIZABETH. I know not where Sickingen is. — Could I but send a message to Maria!

LERSE. Write your message: I will take charge of it. [*Exit.*

SCENE V. — *A Village.*

Enter GOETZ *and* GEORGE.

GOETZ. To horse, George! Quick! I see Miltenberg in flames. Is it thus they keep the treaty? Ride to them, tell them my purpose. The murderous incendiaries — I renounce them — Let them make a thieving gipsy their captain, not me! — Quick, George! (*Exit George.*) Would that I were a thousand miles hence, at the bottom of the deepest dungeon in Turkey! Could I but come off with honour from them! I have thwarted them every day, and told them the bitterest truths, in the hope they might weary of me and let me go.

Enter an UNKNOWN.

UNKNOWN. God save you, gallant sir!

GOETZ. I thank you! What is your errand? Your name?

UNKNOWN. My name does not concern my business. I come to tell you that your life is in danger. The insurgent leaders are weary of hearing from you such harsh language, and are resolved to rid themselves of you. Speak them fair, or endeavour to escape from them; and God be with you. [*Exit.*

GOETZ. To quit life in this fashion, Goetz, to end thus? But be it so — My death will be the clearest proof to the world that I have had nothing in common with the miscreants.

Enter INSURGENTS.

FIRST INSURGENT. Captain, they are prisoners, they are slain!

GOETZ. Who?

SECOND INSURGENT. Those who burned Miltenberg: a troop of confederate cavalry suddenly charged upon them from behind the hill.

GOETZ. They have their reward. Oh, George! George! They have taken him prisoner with the caitiffs — My George! my George!

Enter INSURGENTS *in confusion.*

LINK. Up, sir captain, up! — There is no time to lose. The enemy is at hand and in force.

GOETZ. Who burned Miltenberg?

METZLER. If you mean to pick a quarrel, we'll soon show you how we'll end it.

KOHL. Look to your own safety and ours. — Up!

GOETZ (*to* METZLER). Darest thou threaten me, thou scoundrel? . . . Thinkest thou to awe me, because thy garments are stained with the Count of Helfenstein's blood?

METZLER. Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Thou mayest call me by my name, and my children will not be ashamed to hear it.

METZLER. Out upon thee, coward! — prince's slave!

[GOETZ *strikes him down. The others interpose.*

KOHL. Ye are mad! — The enemy are breaking in on all sides, and you quarrel!

LINK. Away! Away!

[*Cries and tumult. The* INSURGENTS *flee across the stage.*

Enter WEISLINGEN *and* TROOPERS.

WEISLINGEN. Pursue! Pursue! they flee! — Stop neither for darkness nor rain. — I hear Goetz is among them: look that he escape you not. Our friends say he is sorely wounded. (*Exeunt* TROOPERS.) And when I have caught thee — it will be merciful secretly to execute the sentence of death in prison. Thus he perishes from the memory of man; and then, foolish heart, thou mayst beat more freely.

SCENE VI. — *The Front of a Gipsy Hut in a wild Forest. Night. A Fire before the Hut, at which are seated the Mother of the Gipsies and a Girl.*

MOTHER. Throw some fresh straw upon the thatch, daughter: there'll be heavy rain again to-night.

Enter a GIPSY BOY.

BOY. A dormouse, mother! and look! two field-mice!

MOTHER. I'll skin them and roast them for thee, and thou shalt have a cap of their skins. Thou bleedest!

BOY. Dormouse bit me.

MOTHER. Fetch some dead wood, that the fire may burn bright when thy father comes: he will be wet through and through.

Another Gipsy Woman, with a child at her back.

FIRST WOMAN. Hast thou had good luck?

SECOND WOMAN. Ill enough. The whole country is in an uproar: one's life is not safe a moment. Two villages are in a blaze.

FIRST WOMAN. Is it fire that glares so yonder? I have been watching it long. One is so accustomed now to fiery signs in the heavens.

The CAPTAIN OF THE GIPSIES *enters with three of his gang.*

CAPTAIN. Heard ye the wild huntsmen?

FIRST WOMAN. He is passing over us now.

CAPTAIN. How the hounds give tongue! Wow! Wow!

SECOND MAN. How the whips crack!

THIRD MAN. And the huntsmen cheer them — Hallo — ho!

MOTHER. 'Tis the Devil's chase.

CAPTAIN. We have been fishing in troubled waters. The peasants rob each other: there's no harm in our helping them.

SECOND WOMAN. What hast thou got, Wolf?

WOLF. A hare and a capon, a spit, a bundle of linen, three spoons and a bridle.

STICKS. I have a blanket and a pair of boots, also a flint and tinder-box.

MOTHER. All wet as mire: I'll dry them, give them here! [*Trampling without.*

CAPTAIN. Hark! — A horse! Go see who it is.

Enter GOETZ *on horseback.*

GOETZ. I thank thee, God! I see fire — they are gipsies — My wounds bleed sorely — my foes are close behind me! — Great God, this is a fearful end!

CAPTAIN. Is it in peace thou comest?

GOETZ. I crave help from you — My wounds exhaust me: assist me to dismount!

CAPTAIN. Help him! — A gallant warrior in look and speech.

WOLF (*aside*). 'Tis Goetz von Berlichingen!

CAPTAIN. Welcome! welcome! — All that we have is yours.

GOETZ. Thanks, thanks!

CAPTAIN. Come to my hut. [*Exeunt to the hut.*

SCENE VII. — *Inside the Hut.*

CAPTAIN, GIPSIES, *and* GOETZ.

CAPTAIN. Call our mother: tell her to bring blood-wort and bandages. (GOETZ *unarms himself.*) Here is my holiday doublet.

GOETZ. God reward you!

[*The* MOTHER *binds his wounds.*

CAPTAIN. I rejoice that you are come.

GOETZ. Do you know me?

CAPTAIN. Who does not know you, Goetz? Our lives and heart's blood are yours.

Enter STICKS.

STICKS. Horsemen are coming through the wood. They are confederates.

CAPTAIN. Your pursuers! They shall not harm you. Away, Sticks, call the others: we know the passes better than they. We shall shoot them ere they are aware of us.

[*Exeunt* CAPTAIN *and* MEN-GIPSIES *with their guns.*

GOETZ (*alone*). Oh, Emperor! Emperor! Robbers protect thy children. (*A sharp firing.*) The wild foresters! Steady and true!

Enter WOMEN.

WOMEN. Flee, flee! The enemy has overpowered us.

GOETZ. Where is my horse?

WOMEN. Here.

GOETZ (*girds on his sword and mounts without his armour*). For the last time shall you feel my arm. I am not so weak yet. [*Exit.* — *Tumult.*

WOMEN. He gallops to join our party. [*Firing.*

Enter WOLF.

WOLF. Away! Away! All is lost! — The captain is shot! — Goetz a prisoner.

[*The* WOMEN *scream, and fly into the wood.*

SCENE VIII. — ADELAIDE'S *Bedchamber.*

Enter ADELAIDE *with a letter.*

ADELAIDE. He, or I! The tyrant — to threaten me! We will anticipate him. Who glides through the antechamber? (*A low knock at the door.*) Who is there?

FRANCIS (*in a low voice*). Open, gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. Francis! He well deserves that I should admit him. [*Opens the door.*

FRANCIS (*throws himself on her neck*). My dear, my gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. What audacity! If any one should hear you!

FRANCIS. Oh — all — all are asleep!

ADELAIDE. What wouldst thou?

FRANCIS. I cannot rest. The threats of my master — your fate — my heart.

ADELAIDE. He was incensed against me when you parted from him.

FRANCIS. He was as I have never seen him. — "To my castle," said he, "she must — she *shall* go."

ADELAIDE. And shall we obey?

FRANCIS. I know not, dear lady!

ADELAIDE. Thou foolish, infatuated boy! Thou dost not see where this will end. Here he knows I am in safety. He has long had designs on my freedom, and therefore wishes to get me to his castle — there he will have power to use me as his hate shall dictate.

FRANCIS. He shall not!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou prevent him?

FRANCIS. He shall not!

ADELAIDE. I foresee the whole misery of my fate. He will tear me forcibly from his castle to immure me in a cloister.

FRANCIS. Hell and damnation!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou rescue me?

FRANCIS. Anything! Everything!

ADELAIDE (*throws herself weeping upon his neck*). Francis! Oh, save me!

FRANCIS. He shall fall. I will plant my foot upon his neck.

ADELAIDE. No violence. You shall carry a submissive letter to him announcing obedience — Then give him this vial in his wine.

FRANCIS. Give it me! Thou shalt be free!

ADELAIDE. Free! — And then no more shalt thou need to come to my chamber trembling and in fear. No more shall I need anxiously say, "Away, Francis! the morning dawns."

SCENE IX. — *Street before the Prison at Heilbronn.*

ELIZABETH *and* LERSE.

LERSE. Heaven relieve your distress, gracious lady! Maria is come.

ELIZABETH. God be praised! Lerse, we have sunk into dreadful misery. My worst forebodings are realised! A prisoner — thrown as an assassin and malefactor into the deepest dungeon.

LERSE. I know all.

ELIZABETH. Thou knowest nothing. Our distress is too — too great! His age, his wounds, a slow fever — and, more than all, the despondency of his mind, to think that this should be his end.

LERSE. Ay, and that Weislingen should be commissioner!

ELIZABETH. Weislingen!

LERSE. They have acted with unheard-of severity. Metzler has been burnt alive — hundreds of his associates broken upon the wheel, beheaded, quartered, and impaled. All the country round looks like a slaughter-house, where human flesh is cheap.

ELIZABETH. Weislingen commissioner! O Heaven! a ray of hope! Maria shall go to him: he cannot refuse her. He had ever a compassionate heart; and when he sees her whom he once loved so much, whom he has made so miserable — Where is she?

LERSE. Still at the inn.

ELIZABETH. Take me to her. She must away instantly. I fear the worst. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. — *An Apartment in Weislingen's Castle.*

WEISLINGEN, *alone.*

WEISLINGEN. I am so ill, so weak — all my bones are hollow — this wretched fever has consumed their very marrow. No rest, no sleep, by day or night! and when I slumber, such fearful dreams! Last night methought I met Goetz in the forest. He drew his sword, and defied me to combat. I grasped mine, but my hand failed me. He darted on me a look of contempt, sheathed his weapon, and passed on. He is a prisoner, yet I tremble to think of him. Miserable man! Thine own voice has condemned him, yet thou tremblest like a malefactor at his very shadow. And shall he die? Goetz! Goetz! we mortals are not our own masters. Fiends have empire over us, and shape our actions after their own hellish will, to goad us to perdition. (*Sits down.*) Weak! Weak! Why are my nails so blue? A cold, clammy, wasting sweat drenches every limb. Everything swims before my eyes. Could I but sleep! Alas!

Enter MARIA.

WEISLINGEN. Mother of God! Leave me in peace — leave me in peace! This spectre was yet wanting. Maria is dead, and she appears to the traitor. Leave me, blessed spirit! I am wretched enough.

MARIA. Weislingen, I am no spirit. I am Maria.

WEISLINGEN. It is her voice!

MARIA. I came to beg my brother's life of thee. He is guiltless, however culpable he may appear.

WEISLINGEN. Hush! Maria — Angel of heaven as thou art, thou bringest with thee the torments of hell! Speak no more!

MARIA. And must my brother die? Weislingen, it is horrible that I should have to tell thee he is guiltless; that I should be compelled to come as a suppliant to restrain thee from a most fearful murder. Thy soul to its inmost depths is possessed by evil powers. Can this be Adelbert?

WEISLINGEN. Thou seest — the consuming breath of the grave hath swept over me — my strength sinks in death — I die in misery, and thou comest to drive me to despair. Could I but tell thee all, thy bitterest hate would melt to sorrow and compassion. O Maria! Maria!

MARIA. Weislingen, my brother is pining in a dungeon — The anguish of his wounds — his age — oh, hadst thou the heart to bring his gray hairs . . . Weislingen, we should despair!

WEISLINGEN. Enough! [*Rings a hand-bell.*

Enter FRANCIS *in great agitation.*

FRANCIS. Gracious sir.

WEISLINGEN. Those papers, Francis. (*He gives them.* WEISLINGEN *tears open a packet, and shows* MARIA *a paper.*) Here is thy brother's death-warrant signed!

MARIA. God in heaven!

WEISLINGEN. And thus I tear it. He shall live! But can I restore what I have destroyed? Weep not so, Francis! Dear youth, my wretchedness lies deeply at thy heart.

[FRANCIS *throws himself at his feet, and clasps his knees.*

MARIA (*apart*). He is ill — very ill. The sight of him rends my heart. I loved him! And now that I again approach him, I feel how dearly —

WEISLINGEN. Francis, arise, and cease to weep — I may recover! While there is life, there is hope.

FRANCIS. You cannot! You must die!

WEISLINGEN. Must?

FRANCIS (*beside himself*). Poison! poison! — from your wife! I — I gave it. [*Rushes out.*

WEISLINGEN. Follow him, Maria — he is desperate. [*Exit* MARIA.

Poison from my wife! Alas! alas! I feel it. Torture and death!

MARIA (*within*). Help! help!

WEISLINGEN (*attempts in vain to rise*). God! I cannot.

MARIA (*reëntering*). He is gone! He threw himself desperately from a window of the hall into the river.

WEISLINGEN. It is well with him. Thy brother is out of danger. The other commissioners, especially Seckendorf, are his friends. They will readily allow him to ward himself upon his knightly word. Farewell, Maria! Now go.

MARIA. I will stay with thee — thou poor forsaken one!

WEISLINGEN. Poor and forsaken indeed! O God, thou art a terrible avenger! My wife!

MARIA. Remove from thee that thought. Turn thy soul to the throne of mercy.

WEISLINGEN. Go, thou gentle spirit! leave me to my misery! Horrible! Even thy presence, Maria, even the attendance of my only comforter, is agony.

MARIA (*aside*). Strengthen me, Heaven! My soul droops with his.

WEISLINGEN. Alas! alas! Poison from my wife! My Francis seduced by the wretch! She waits — listens to every horse's hoof for the messenger who brings her the news of my death. And thou, too, Maria, wherefore art thou come to awaken every slumbering recollection of my sins? Leave me, leave me that I may die!

MARIA. Let me stay! Thou art alone: think I am thy nurse. Forget all. May God forgive thee as freely as I do!

WEISLINGEN. Thou spirit of love! pray for me! pray for me! My heart is seared.

MARIA. There is forgiveness for thee. — Thou art exhausted.

WEISLINGEN. I die! I die! and yet I cannot die. In the fearful contest between life and death lie the torments of hell.

MARIA. Heavenly Father, have compassion upon him. Grant him but one token of thy love, that his heart may be opened to comfort, and his soul to the hope of eternal life, even in the agony of death!

SCENE XI. — *A Narrow Vault dimly illuminated. The Judges of the Secret Tribunal discovered seated, all muffled in Black Cloaks.*

ELDEST JUDGE. Judges of the Secret Tribunal, sworn by the cord and the steel to be inflexible in justice, to judge in secret, and to avenge in secret, like the Deity! Are your hands clean and your hearts pure? Raise them to heaven, and cry, Woe upon evil-doers!

ALL. Woe! woe!

ELDEST JUDGE. Crier, begin the diet of judgment.

CRIER. I cry, I cry for accusation against evil-doers! He whose heart is pure, whose hands are clean to swear by the cord and the steel, let him lift up his voice and call upon the steel and the cord for vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!

ACCUSER (*comes forward*). My heart is pure from misdeed, and my hands are clean from innocent blood: God pardon my sins of thought, and prevent their exe-

cution. I raise my hand on high, and cry for vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!

ELDEST JUDGE. Vengeance upon whom?

ACCUSER. I call upon the cord and the steel for vengeance against Adelaide of Weislingen. She has committed adultery and murder. She has poisoned her husband by the hands of his servant — the servant hath slain himself — the husband is dead.

ELDEST JUDGE. Dost thou swear by the God of truth, that thy accusation is true?

ACCUSER. I swear!

ELDEST JUDGE. Dost thou invoke upon thine own head the punishment of murder and adultery, should thy accusation be found false?

ACCUSER. On my head be it.

ELDEST JUDGE. Your voices!

[*They converse a few minutes in whispers.*

ACCUSER. Judges of the Secret Tribunal, what is your sentence upon Adelaide of Weislingen, accused of murder and adultery?

ELDEST JUDGE. She shall die! — she shall die a bitter and twofold death! By the double doom of the steel and the cord shall she expiate the double crime. Raise your hands to heaven and cry, Woe, woe upon her! Be she delivered into the hands of the avenger.

ALL. Woe! woe!

ELDEST JUDGE. Woe! Avenger, come forth.

[*A man advances.*

Here, take thou the cord and the steel! Within eight days shalt thou blot her out from before the face of heaven: wheresoever thou findest her, down with her into the dust. Judges, ye that judge in secret, and avenge in secret like the Deity, keep your hearts from wickedness, and your hands from innocent blood!

[*Scene closes.*

Scene XII. — *The Court of an Inn.*

Lerse *and* Maria.

Maria. The horses have rested long enough: we will away, Lerse.

Lerse. Stay till to-morrow: this is a dreadful night.

Maria. Lerse, I cannot rest till I have seen my brother. Let us away: the weather is clearing up — we may expect a fair morning.

Lerse. Be it as you will.

Scene XIII. — *The Prison at Heilbronn.*

Goetz *and* Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. I entreat thee, dear husband, speak to me. Thy silence alarms me: thy spirit consumes thee, pent up within thy breast. Come, let me see thy wounds: they mend daily. In this desponding melancholy I know thee no longer!

Goetz. Seekest thou Goetz? He is long since gone! Piece by piece have they robbed me of all I held dear, — my hand, my property, my freedom, my good name! My life! Of what value is it to me? What news of George? Is Lerse gone to seek him?

Elizabeth. He is, my love! Be of good cheer: things may yet take a favourable turn.

Goetz. He whom God hath stricken lifts himself up no more! I best know the load I have to bear. — To misfortune I am inured. — But now it is not Weislingen alone, not the peasants alone, not the death of the emperor, nor my wounds, — it is the whole united. . . . My hour is come! I had hoped

it should have been like my life. But his will be done!

ELIZABETH. Wilt not thou eat something?

GOETZ. Nothing, my love. See how the sun shines yonder!

ELIZABETH. It is a fine spring day!

GOETZ. My love, wilt thou ask the keeper's permission for me to walk in his little garden for half an hour, that I may look upon the clear face of heaven, the pure air, and the blessed sun?

ELIZABETH. I will — and he will readily grant it.

SCENE THE LAST. — *The Prison Garden.*

LERSE *and* MARIA.

MARIA. Go in, and see how it stands with them.

[*Exit* LERSE.

Enter ELIZABETH *and* KEEPER.

ELIZABETH (*to the* KEEPER). God reward your kindness and attention to my husband! (*Exit* KEEPER.) Maria, how hast thou sped?

MARIA. My brother is safe! But my heart is torn asunder. Weislingen is dead! Poisoned by his wife. My husband is in danger — the princes are becoming too powerful for him: they say he is surrounded and besieged.

ELIZABETH. Believe not the rumour, and let not Goetz hear it.

MARIA. How is it with him?

ELIZABETH. I feared he would not survive till thy return: the hand of the Lord is heavy on him. And George is dead!

MARIA. George! The gallant boy!

ELIZABETH. When the miscreants were burning Miltenberg, his master sent him to check their villainy. A body of cavalry charged upon them: had they all behaved as George, they must all have had as clear a conscience. Many were killed, and George among them: he died the death of a warrior.

MARIA. Does Goetz know it?

ELIZABETH. We conceal it from him. He questions me ten times a day concerning him, and sends me as often to see what is become of him. I fear to give his heart this last wound.

MARIA. O God! What are the hopes of this world?

Enter GOETZ, LERSE, *and* KEEPER.

GOETZ. Almighty God! How lovely it is beneath thy heaven! How free! The trees put forth their buds, and all the world awakes to hope. . . . Farewell, my children! My roots are cut away, my strength totters to the grave.

ELIZABETH. Shall I not send Lerse to the convent for thy son, that thou mayst once more see and bless him?

GOETZ. Let him be: he needs not my blessing, he is holier than I. — Upon our wedding-day, Elizabeth, could I have thought I should die thus! — My old father blessed us, and prayed for a succession of noble and gallant sons. — God, thou hast not heard him. I am the last. . . . Lerse, thy countenance cheers me in the hour of death, more than in our most daring fights: then, my spirit encouraged all of you; now, thine supports me . . . Oh, that I could but once more see George, and sun myself in his look! You turn away, and weep. He is dead? George is dead? Then die, Goetz! Thou hast outlived thyself, outlived the noblest of thy servants. . . . How died he? Alas! they took him among the incendiaries, and he has been executed?

ELIZABETH. No! he was slain at Miltenberg, while fighting for his freedom like a lion.

GOETZ. God be praised! He was the kindest youth under the sun, and one of the bravest. . . . Now release my soul. My poor wife! I leave thee in a wicked world. Lerse, forsake her not! Lock your hearts more carefully than your doors. The age of fraud is at hand, treachery will reign unchecked. The worthless will gain the ascendency by cunning, and the noble will fall into their net. Maria, may God restore thy husband to thee! May he not fall the deeper for having risen so high! Selbitz is dead, and the good emperor, and my George. . . . Give me a draught of water! . . . Heavenly air! Freedom! freedom! [*He dies.*

ELIZABETH. Freedom is above, — above, with thee! The world is a prison-house.

MARIA. Noble man! Woe to this age that rejected thee!

LERSE. And woe to the future, that shall misjudge thee!

The Fellow Culprits

A Comedy in Verse and in Three Acts

Translated by Edgar A. Bowring, C. B.

This clever comedy, like the preceding piece, was written during Goethe's residence at Leipsic; but it was touched up and improved at intervals, during subsequent years, until it was printed in his collected works. That its author considered it of some importance, is shown by the fact that it was one of the plays acted by the amateur company at the court of Weimar.

Dramatis Personæ

The Host.
Sophia, his daughter.
Soller, her husband.
Alcestes.
A Waiter.

The Scene is in the Inn.

The Fellow Culprits

ACT I.

Scene I. *The Inn Parlour.*

Soller, *in a domino at a table, with a bottle of wine before him.* Sophia, *opposite him, sewing a white feather on to a hat. The* Host *enters. At the back of the stage is a table with pen, ink, and paper. A large easy-chair is near it.*

HOST.

Another ball! My son, I'm sick of all this riot;
I thought that by this time you'd like a little quiet.
I certainly ne'er gave my daughter's hand to you,
To see my hard-won cash so recklessly run through.
I'm getting old, and sought my forces to recruit;
Assistance wanted I, and so allow'd your suit:
A nice assistance yours, to waste each little earning.
(Soller *hums a tune to himself.*)
Yes, sing away! You'll soon another song be learning.
A good-for-nothing chap, whose folly few men's matches,
Plays, drinks, tobacco smokes, and plots of all kinds hatches.
You revel all the night, are half the day in bed:
No prince throughout the land an easier life e'er led.

There the adventurer sits, with spreading sleeves.
Ha! ha!
The king of coxcombs he!

SOLLER (*drinks*).

I drink your health, papa!

HOST.

You drink my health, indeed! Enough to give me fever!

SOPHIA.

My father, pray be kind!

SOLLER (*drinks*).

Soph, happy be for ever!

SOPHIA.

Be happy! Ah, could I but see you two agree!

HOST.

Unless he changes much, that certainly can't be.
I've long indeed been sick of these disputes eternal;
But while he thus behaves, the nuisance is infernal.
He is a wicked man, cold, thankless to the last;
He sees not what he is, remembers not the past:
The poverty from which I saved him, he forgets,
And my munificence in paying all his debts.
Distress, repentance, time, no change in him have wrought:
The man who's once a scamp is always good for nought.

SOPHIA.

He'll surely change some day.

HOST.

He little hurry shows.

SOPHIA.

'Tis but the way of youth.

SOLLER (*drinks*).

To all we love, here goes!

HOST.

In at one ear, forsooth, and at the other out.
He doesn't hear me. I a cipher am, no doubt.
I now for twenty years an honour'd life have led:
What I have saved, you hope to make your own instead,
And bit by bit consume? If this is what you're at,
You're much mistaken, friend! 'Tis not so bad as that.
Long has endured, and long will still last, my vocation:
The host of the Black Bear is known throughout creation.
No foolish Bear is he, his skin he looks to well:
My house is painted now, I call it a hotel.
Soon cavaliers will come, and gold will fall in showers:
We none must idle be, or waste in drink our hours.
To bed at twelve o'clock, up as soon as it is day,
That's it!

SOLLER.

All this, just now, is pretty far away.
May things go on as now, and never get less steady!
Where are our many guests? The rooms above are ready.

HOST.

Few travel at this time: the house will fill up soon.
Has Squire Alcestes not two rooms and the saloon?

SOLLER.

That's nothing, yes: a right good customer is he;
Yet sixty minutes good in ev'ry hour there be,
And Squire Alcestes knows why he is here.

HOST.

Knows why?

SOLLER.

But, apropos, papa! To-day informed was I:
A corps of brave young folks in Germany's preparing
To help America, both gold and succour bearing.
If they get men enough, and courage for the mission,
Next spring, 'tis said, they'll start upon their expedition.

HOST.

Yes, oft I've heard them boast, as they a bottle share,
What wonders they would do for my compatriots there;
Then freedom was the cry, vast valour they affected,
But when the morning came their vows none recollected.

SOLLER.

Ah, there are chaps enough, who're always gushing over:
There's one not far from you who is an ardent lover;
Would he romantic be, or aim at the sublime,
With head well placed in front, he'll scour the world in time.

HOST.

If from our customers that one would take a hint,
'Twould be so nice, and he could write us, without stint,
Such letters! What a joke!

SOLLER.

'Tis deucèd far from here.

HOST.

What matters that? In time the letters would appear.
I'll go up-stairs at once, and with the map's assistance,
That's in the little room, I'll soon find out the distance.

Scene II. — Sophia, Soller.

SOLLER.

One's pretty well off here, when one can read the papers.

SOPHIA.

Yes, let him have his way.

SOLLER.

I'm calm, and have no vapours:
'Tis well for him, indeed! Was ever such a bully!

SOPHIA.

I pray you —

SOLLER.

No! I needs must speak my mind out fully!
A year ago was I, as I can ne'er forget,
A trav'ller here by chance, head over ears in debt —

SOPHIA.

My dear, be not so cross!

SOLLER.

Those thoughts will still molest me.
And yet Sophia found she didn't quite detest me.

SOPHIA.

You leave me ne'er in peace, reproaching night and day.

SOLLER.

I don't reproach you, dear; 'tis but my little way.
A pretty woman ne'er can be by man held hateful,
Whatever may betide! You see I'm not ungrateful.
Sophia pretty is, and I am not of stone:
'Tis my delight that you now me as husband own.
I love you —

SOPHIA.

Yet you ne'er allow a moment's bliss.

SOLLER.

There's nothing in it, love! But I can tell you this:
Alcestes loved you well, for you with love did burn;
You long have known him too, and loved him in return.

SOPHIA.

Ah!

SOLLER.

No: don't be disturb'd. I see no evil there:
If we should plant a tree, it shoots up in the air;
And when it brings forth fruit, who happens to be by
Will eat it, and next year there's more. Sophia, I
Know you too well to feel the least annoyance after.
I find it laughable.

SOPHIA.

I see no cause for laughter.
"Alcestes loved me well, for me with love did burn;
I long have known him too, and loved him in return."
What's after that?

SOLLER.

Why, nought! I never said, in truth,
That more remains behind. For in her early youth,
When first a maiden blooms, she loves in make-believe:
A something stirs her heart, but what, she can't conceive.
At forfeits she will kiss: she presently grows bigger;
The kiss still nicer is, impress'd with greater vigour.
She knows not why she now her mother's blame incurs:
'Tis virtue when she loves, she's guileless when she errs.
And if experience comes her other gifts to swell,
And makes a prudent wife, her husband likes it well.

SOPHIA.

You understand me not.

SOLLER.

I only meant to quiz;
What drinking is to men, a kiss to maidens is:
One glass, and then one more, till on the ground we sink;
If we would sober keep, the plan is — not to drink.
Enough that you are mine! — Is't not three years and more
Since Squire Alcestes here was guest and friend before?
How long was he away?

SOPHIA.

Three years, I think.

SOLLER.

And now
He's been a fortnight here this time —

SOPHIA.

My love, I vow
I know not what you mean.

SOLLER.

'Tis only conversation:
'Tween man and wife there is so little explanation.
But wherefore is he here?

SOPHIA.

For pleasure, I suppose.

SOLLER.

Perchance his heart for you with love still overflows.
If he still loves, would you still treat him as before?

SOPHIA.

Love's capable of much, but duty is of more.
You think —

SOLLER.

I nothing think; and understand the saying:
A man's worth more than fops who live by fiddle-playing.
The sweetest tunes we hear in any shepherd's song
Are only tunes; and tunes the palate cloy ere long.

SOPHIA.

'Tis well to talk of tunes. Does yours sound much more gaily?
The state of discontent in which you live grows daily.
No moment in the day is from your teasing free:
If folks would be beloved, they lovable must be.
And were you quite the man, happy to make a maiden?
Why should I always be with your reproaches laden
For what is nothing? Yes, the house is near a crash:
You will not do a stroke, and only spend the cash.
You live from hand to mouth; your debts are always many;
And when your wife wants aught, she cannot get a penny,
And you won't take the pains to earn it for her. Yes:
Be a good man, would you a worthy wife possess.
Help her to pass her time, and what she needs, obtain;
And as concerns the rest, you may in peace remain.

SOLLER.

Speak to your father, then!

SOPHIA.

That's what I've done quite lately.
There's many a thing we want, and trade has suffer'd greatly.
I asked him yesterday to hand me something over:
"What," cried he, "you no cash, and Soller there in clover!"
He gave me nothing, swore, with much abuse behind it.
Now tell me, please, where you expect that I shall find it?
You're not a man who e'er would for his wife feel sorrow.

SOLLER.

Oh, wait, dear child! perchance I shall receive to-
morrow
From a good friend —

SOPHIA.

Oh, yes! from one who is a ninny.
I often hear of friends prepared to lend their guinea;
But when we want gold, I never see that friend.
No, Soller, you must know that game is at an end!

SOLLER.

You have what needful is —

SOPHIA.

I know what you are at;
But those who ne'er were poor need something more
than that.
The gifts of Fortune oft to spoil us are inclined:
We have what needful is, yet fancy her unkind.
The pleasure maidens love, and women too, — that
joy
I neither hunger for, nor do I find it cloy.
Fine dresses, balls! Enough, I am a woman true.

SOLLER.

Then go with me to-day. That's what I say to you.

SOPHIA.

That like the carnival our mode of life may be,
A revel for a time, that's ended suddenly.
I'd sooner sit alone whole years together here.
If you will nothing save, your wife must save, — that's
clear.

Enough already is my father's indignation:
I calm his wrath, and am his only consolation.
No! with my money, sir, you shall not make so free:
A little save yourself, and something spend on me!

SOLLER.

My child, for just this once allow me to be merry:
When comes the time for mass, we'll then be serious, very.

A WAITER *enters.*

Squire Soller!

SOLLER.

Well, what now?

WAITER.

Here's Herr von Tirinette!

SOPHIA.

The gambler?

SOLLER.

Send him off! Could I his name forget!

WAITER.

See you he must, he says.

SOPHIA.

What can he want with you?

SOLLER.

He's leaving here — (*To the* WAITER.) — I'll come!
(*To* SOPHIA.) He wants to say adieu.
[*Exit.*

Scene III.

SOPHIA (*alone*).

He comes to dun him! Yes, his money's lost at play:
He's ruining us all, and I must bear it! Say,
Is this where all thy joys, thy dreams of pleasure, are?
The wife of such a man! Hast thou gone back so far?
Where is the vanished time, in which the youngsters sweet
In troops were wont to pay their homage at thy feet?
When each one sought to read his fate within thine eyes?
In affluence I stood, a goddess from the skies.
The servants of my whims all watchful round me pressed:
It was enough to fill with vanity my breast.
And, ah! a maiden is in evil case, in truth.
If she is pretty, she is ogled by each youth;
All day her head's confused by praises loud and strong:
What maiden can withstand such fiery trial long?
Ye could so nobly act, one thinks your word enough,
Ye men! But all at once the Devil takes you off:
When ye can taste by stealth, all join the feast instanter;
But if a girl's in love, ye vanish in a canter.
Thus gentlemen themselves in these hard times amuse,
Some twenty disappear, and half a one then woos.
I found myself at last not utterly passed o'er;
But chances fewer grow, when one is twenty-four.
Then Soller came, and soon accepted was by me:
He's an unworthy wretch, but still a man is he.
Here sit I now, and might as well be in my grave.
Admirers by the score I still, indeed, might have,
But what would be the use? If haply they are silly,
They would but breed ennui, and bore me, willy-nilly;

And dang'rous 'tis to love, suppose your friend is clever:
He'll to your detriment his cleverness turn ever.
When love was absent, I for no attentions cared, —
And now, — Oh, my poor heart! wert thou for this prepared?
Alcestes has returned. Ah, what new torment this!
To see him formerly — ay, those were days of bliss.
How loved I him! — And yet — I know not what I will.
I shun him timidly, he is reserved and still;
I am afraid of him; my fear is fully grounded.
Ah, knew he that my heart still throbs with love unbounded!
He comes. I tremble now. My breast feels anguish new:
I know not what I will, still less what I should do.

SCENE IV. — SOPHIA, ALCESTES.

ALCESTES (*dressed, but without hat and sword*).

Your pardon, ma'am, I pray, if I appear intrusive.

SOPHIA.

You're joking, sir: you know this room is not exclusive.

ALCESTES.

I feel that you no more to others me prefer.

SOPHIA.

I do not understand how that can hurt you, sir.

ALCESTES.

You do not, cruel one? Can I survive your ire?

SOPHIA.

Excuse me, if you please: I fear I must retire.

ALCESTES.

Oh, where, Sophia, where? — You turn your face away,
Withdraw your hand? Have you no mem'ry left
to-day?
Behold. Alcestes 'tis! A hearing he entreats.

SOPHIA.

Alas! how my poor heart with wild excitement beats!

ALCESTES.

If you're Sophia, stay!

SOPHIA.

In mercy, spare me, spare me!
I must, I must away!

ALCESTES.

Sophia, can't you bear me?
O cruel one! Methought, She now is quite alone:
This is the very time to have some kindness shown.
I hoped that she could speak one friendly word to me,
But go now, go! 'Twas in this very room that she
The ardour of her love to me discovered first;
'Twas here that into flames our mutual passion burst.
Upon this very spot, — remember you no more? —
Eternal faith you pledged! —

SOPHIA.

Oh, spare me, I implore!

ALCESTES.

I never can forget, — the evening was enchanting:
Your eyes spoke out, and I in ardour was not wanting.
Your lips against my lips you tremblingly did press, —
My heart still deeply feels that utter happiness.
Your only joy was then to see or think of me;
And now, for me not e'en one hour will you keep free.
You see me seek for you; you see how I am sad:
Go, false heart, go! you ne'er for me affection had.

SOPHIA.

You torture me, when now my heart enough oppressed is?
You dare to say that I have never loved Alcestes?
You were my one sole wish, my greatest joy were you;
For you my blood was stirred, for you my heart beat true;
And this good heart which I did then to you surrender,
Must still remember you, can never be untender.
I'm often troubled still with all this recollection:
As fresh as it was then, remaineth my affection.

ALCESTES.

You angel! Dearest heart! (*He attempts to embrace her.*)

SOPHIA.

There's some one coming now.

ALCESTES.

What, not one single word? I ne'er can this allow.
Thus the whole day is spent. How wretched is my lot!
I've been a fortnight here, to you have spoken not.
I know you love me still, but this I painful find:
We never are alone, we ne'er can speak our mind.

Not for one moment e'er this room in peace abides:
Sometimes your father 'tis, your husband then besides.
I shall not stay here long: I can endure it never.
All things are possible to those who will, however.
Once you were always prompt, expedients to devise;
And jealousy was blind, though with a hundred eyes.
And if you only —

SOPHIA.

What?

ALCESTES.

Would bear in mind that ne'er
Alcestes must by you be driven to despair.
Beloved one, do not fail to seek a fitting spot
For private converse, since this place affords it not.
But hark! this very night goes out your worthy spouse.
'Tis thought I, too, shall join a carnival-carouse.
The back door to my stairs is quite adjacent, so
No person in the house of my return will know.
The keys are in my hands, and if you'll me receive —

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, I'm surprised —

ALCESTES.

And am I to believe
That you're no woman false? that still your heart is mine?
The only means that yet are left us, you decline?
Know you Alcestes not? And can you still delay
During the night one hour to while with him away?
Enough! Sophia, I to-night may visit you?
Or, if it safer seems, you'll come to me? Adieu!

SOPHIA.

This is too much!

ALCESTES.

Too much! A pretty way to speak!
The deuce! too much! too much! Am I week after week
To waste for nothing here? — Damnation! why remain
If you don't care? I'll go to-morrow off again.

SOPHIA.

Beloved one! Best one!

ALCESTES.

Ay, my grief you see and know,
And you remain unmoved! I'll hence for ever go.

Scene V. — The Above. The Host.

HOST.

A letter, sir, — from some great person, I opine.
The seal is very large: the paper, too, is fine.

(Alcestes *tears open the letter*).

HOST (*aside*).

What's in this letter, I should vastly like to know!

ALCESTES (*who has read the letter through hastily*).

To-morrow morning hence full early I must go.
The bill!

HOST.

To start off thus, at such a time of rain,
The letter must indeed important news contain.
May I perchance presume to ask your Honour why?

ALCESTES.

No!

HOST (*to* SOPHIA).

Ask him: he to you will certainly reply.
(*He goes to the table at the bottom of the stage, where he takes his books out of the drawer, sits down, and makes out the bill.*)

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, is it so?

ALCESTES.

Her coaxing face, just see!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, I entreat, depart not thus from me!

ALCESTES.

Make up your mind at once to see me, then, to-night.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

What shall — what can I do! He must not leave my sight:
My only joy is he —
(*Aloud.*) You see, I never can —
Remember, I'm a wife.

ALCESTES.

The Devil take the man!
You'll be a widow then! These passing hours employ:
Perchance they'll be the last, as well as first, of joy.
One word. At midnight, then, my love, I shall appear.

SOPHIA.

My father's chamber is to mine so very near.

ALCESTES.

Well, then, you'll come to me! Why this consideration?
The moments fly away 'midst all your hesitation.
Here, take the keys.

SOPHIA.

My key will open ev'ry door.

ALCESTES.

Then come, my darling child! Why trifle any more?
Now, will you?

SOPHIA.

Will I?

ALCESTES.

Well?

SOPHIA.

Yes, I will come to you.

ALCESTES (*to the* HOST).

Mine host, I shall not go.

HOST (*advancing*).

Good!
(*To* SOPHIA.) Wherefore this ado?

SOPHIA.

Nought will he say.

HOST.

What, nought?

SCENE VI. — THE ABOVE. SOLLER.

ALCESTES.

My hat!

SOPHIA.

There lies it! here!

ALCESTES.

Adieu, I must be off.

SOLLER.

I wish you, sir, good cheer!

ALCESTES.

Fair madam, fare you well!

SOPHIA.

Farewell!

SOLLER.

Your humble servant!

ALCESTES.

I first must go up-stairs.

SOLLER (*aside*).

Each day he grows more fervent.

HOST (*taking a light*).

Allow me, sir.

ALCESTES (*taking it politely out of his hand*).

Good host, indeed I can't consent!

(*Exit.*)

SOPHIA.

Well, Soller, you are off! How if I also went?

SOLLER.

Aha! you now would fain —

SOPHIA.

No, go! I spoke in jest.

SOLLER.

No, no! I understand this longing in your breast.
If one a person sees who's going to a ball
While one must go to bed, full hard 'tis after all.
There'll be another soon.

SOPHIA.

Oh, yes, to wait I'm able.
Now, Soller, be discreet, and shun the gaming-table.
(*To the* HOST, *who has meanwhile been standing in deep thought.*)
And now, good night, papa. I'm off to bed, you see.

HOST

Good night, Sophia dear.

SOLLER.

Sleep well!
(*Looking after her.*) Right fair is she!
(*He runs after her, and kisses her again at the door.*
Sleep well, my lamb!
(*To the* HOST.) And you will also go to bed!

HOST.

A devil's letter that! I'd like to hear it read!
(*To* SOLLER.) Now, Carnival! Good night!

SOLLER.

Thanks! Calm be your repose!

HOST.

Good Soller, when you go, take care the door to close!
(*Exit.*)

SOLLER.

You needn't be alarmed!

SCENE VII.

SOLLER (*alone*).

What song will now be sung?
Oh, that accursed play! I wish the rogue were hung!
His figures were not fair, and I must bear it too!
He storms and fumes away: I know not what to do.
Suppose . . . Alcestes gold has got . . . and my false keys —
I'm sure at my expense he fain himself would please.
I long have hated him; around my wife he slinks;

And now, just for this once, I'll be his guest, methinks.
But then, if it were known, there'd be the deuce to pay —
I'm now in such distress, I know no other way.
The gamester claims his gold, or threatens vengeance deep.
Then, Soller, courage take! The whole house is asleep.
And if it be found out, they'll find me safely bedded:
Thieves oft escape who are to handsome women wedded.
(*Exit.*)

ACT II.

Alcestes's Room.

The stage is divided in its length into parlour and alcove. On one side of the parlour stands a table, on which are papers and a strong box. At the bottom is a large door, and at the side a small one, opposite the alcove.

Scene I.

SOLLER (*in his domino, with a mask on his face, without shoes, a dark lantern in his hand, enters at the little door, and turns the light fearfully round the room: he then advances more boldly, takes off his mask and speaks*).

One need not valiant be, in following one's calling:
One through the world may go by cunning and by crawling.
While one, to get a bag of gold, or p'rhaps his death,
With pistols armed, will come and say with bated breath,
"Give up your purse, and lose no time about it, pray,"

As quietly as if he only said, Good day.
Another round you steals, and with his magic passes
And sleight-of-hand your watch soon in his power, alas! is;
And when you seek it, he says boldly to your face,
"I'll steal it. Take good care;" and that is soon the case.
But Nature gave me ne'er endowments such as that:
My heart too tender is, my fingers are too fat.
Yet, not to be a rogue, is difficult indeed:
Each day the cash grows less, each day the more we need.
You now have made the leap: take care that you don't fall!
Each person in the house believes I'm at the ball.
Alcestes at the fête is now; my wife's alone:
Has constellation e'er a better aspect shown?
(*Approaching the table.*)
Oh, come, thou holy one! Thou god in this strong box!
Without thee, e'en a king is scarcely orthodox.
Ye picklocks, many thanks! your merit is untold:
Through you I capture him, the mighty picklock, —
Gold! (*Whilst he is trying to open the strong box.*)
An extra clerk I once was in a court of justice:
I didn't stop there long, — so little people's trust is.
'Twas write, write, write, all day, with trouble still increasing:
The prospects were not good, the drudgery unceasing;
'Twas insupportable. A thief was caught one day:
False keys were on him found, and he was hanged straightway.
Tenacious of her rights is justice known to be:
A subaltern was I, the false keys fell to me.
I picked them up. A thing may seem for little fit,
But there may come a time when you'll be glad of it.
And now (*The lock springs open*).
O lovely coin! I feel like one possessed.
(*He puts money in his pocket.*)

My pocket swells with cash, with rapture swells my breast —
Unless 'tis fright. But hark! Ye coward limbs! Pooh, pooh!
Why tremble thus? — Enough!
(*He looks into the strong box again, and takes more money.*)
Once more! Yes, that will do.
(*He closes it and starts.*)
Again? There's something stirs! This house was never haunted —
The devil 'tis, perchance! His presence isn't wanted.
Is it a cat? But no! Tom-cats walk lighter, rather.
Be quick! They're at the lock —
(*He springs into the aleove.*)

SCENE II. — *The* HOST (*entering at the side door with a wax candle*). SOLLER.

SOLLER.

The deuce! It's my wife's father!

HOST.

'Tis folly to possess a nervous disposition:
Half guilty only yet, my heart's in ebullition.
Inquisitive I ne'er in all my life have been,
But in that letter some great secret may be seen.
The papers are so dull, they long have nothing told:
The newest thing one hears is always one month old.
And then, indeed, it is a most excessive bore,
When each one says: "Oh, yes! I've read your tale before."
Were I a cavalier, a minister I'd be;
Then all the couriers needs must bring their news to me.
This letter I can't find. Perchance he left it not:
If so, confound it all! There's nothing to be got.

SOLLER (*aside*).

You good old fool! I see the god of news and thieves
Less worship gets from you than he from me receives.

HOST.

I cannot find it — Hah! — Just hark! What noise is that
In the saloon? —

SOLLER.

Perchance he smells me!

HOST.

By the pat,
It is a woman's foot.

SOLLER.

That hardly meets my case.

HOST (*blows out his candle, and lets it fall, whilst in his confusion he cannot unlock the little door*).

This lock still bothers me.

(*Pushes open the door, and exit.*)

SCENE III. — SOPHIA, *entering at the bottom door with a light.* SOLLER.

SOLLER (*aside, in the alcove*).

It is a woman's face!
Hell! Devil! 'Tis my wife! What can this indicate?

SOPHIA.

I quake at this bold step.

SOLLER.

'Tis she, as sure as fate!
A pretty rendezvous! But now suppose again
I showed myself! My neck would be in danger then.

SOPHIA.

Just follow in Love's wake! With friendly mien he first
Allures you on awhile —

SOLLER.

I feel that I shall burst.
But I dare not —

SOPHIA.

. But if you ever lose your way,
No *ignis fatuus* e'en such cruel tricks will play.

SOLLER.

A bog to you would prove less than this room a curse.

SOPHIA.

Matters have long gone ill, but now grow daily worse.
My husband gets quite wild. He always caused me trouble;
But now so bad is he, I hate him nearly double.

SOLLER.

You wretch!

SOPHIA.

He has my hand. Alcestes, as erewhile,
My heart possesses still.

SOLLER.

Enchantment, poison vile
Were not so bad!

SOPHIA.

This heart, which for him fiercely burned,
And which from him alone the art of love first learned —

SOLLER.

The deuce!

SOPHIA.

. . . Was calm and cold, ere softened by Alcestes.

SOLLER.

Ye husbands, hear the tale that now by her confessed is!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes loved me well.

SOLLER.

That's over long ago.

SOPHIA.

And how I loved him too!

SOLLER.

Mere child's play, as you know.

SOPHIA.

Fate parted us; and, ah! my sins to expiate,
I needs must wed a brute. — Oh, what a dreadful fate!

SOLLER.

A brute am I? — A brute? A brute with horns, too, now.

SOPHIA.

What see I?

SOLLER.

Madam, what?

SOPHIA.

My father's candle! How
Could it come here? — Suppose. . . . If so, I needs must fly.
Perchance he's watching us! —

SOLLER.

Your scourge, O conscience, ply!

SOPHIA.

Yet I can't understand how he could lose it here.

SOLLER.

Fears she her father not, the devil she won't fear.

SOPHIA.

Ah, no! all in the house in deepest slumber lie.

SOLLER.

Ay, lust more potent is than fear of penalty.

SOPHIA.

My father is in bed. — How ever could it be?
Well, be it so!

SOLLER.

Alas!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, where is he?

SOLLER.

Oh, could I but —

SOPHIA.

My heart forebodes some coming evil:
I love and fear him too.

SOLLER.

I fear him like the devil,
And more too. If he came, I'd say: "Good king infernal,
If you will take them off, I'll owe you thanks eternal."

SOPHIA.

Thou art too honest, heart! What crime committest thou?
Thou vowedst to be true? Why care for such a vow?
True to that man to be, who has no single merit,
Who is so very coarse, false, foolish?

SOLLER.

Thanks, I hear it!

SOPHIA.

If one may not detest such monsters for their pains,
I much prefer the land where devil-worship reigns.
He is a devil!

SOLLER.

What? A devil? Monster? Me!
I cannot bear it more. (*He is about to spring out.*)

SCENE IV. — ALCESTES (*dressed with hat and sword, covered with a cloak, which he immediately takes off*). THE ABOVE.

ALCESTES.

You're waiting, then, I see.

SOPHIA.

Sophia came here first.

ALCESTES.

You fear?

SOPHIA.

I'm fainting nearly.

ALCESTES.

No, dearest, no?

SOLLER.

How fond! Preliminaries merely.

SOPHIA.

You feel how much this heart has suffered for your sake, —
This heart you understand: forgive the step I take!

ALCESTES.

Sophia!

SOPHIA.

Ne'er shall I, if you forgive it, rue.

SOLLER.

You'd better ask of me if I forgive it too.

SOPHIA.

What made me hither come? In truth, I scarce know why.

SOLLER.

I know it but too well.

SOPHIA.

As one that dreams am I.

SOLLER.

Would I were dreaming too!

SOPHIA.

A heart full of distress
I bring to you.

ALCESTES.

To tell one's trouble makes it less.

SOPHIA.

A sympathetic heart like yours I ne'er did see.

SOLLER.

When you together yawn, you call that sympathy!
Delightful!

SOPHIA.

And when thus a perfect man I've found,
Why to your opposite am I for ever bound?
I have a heart which ne'er to virtue said adieu.

ALCESTES.

I know it.

SOLLER.

Yes, and I.

SOPHIA.

Though lovable are you,
One single word from me you never should have guessed,
Unless this hapless heart were hopelessly oppressed.
I day by day behold our house to ruin go.
The life my husband leads! How can we go on so!
I know he loves me not; my tears he never sees:
And when my father storms, him too must I appease.
Each morning with it brings fresh ground for provocation.

SOLLER (*touched after a fashion*).

Poor woman! I confess there's cause for her vexation.

SOPHIA.

My husband has no wish to lead a proper life:
In vain I talk; no man has such a yielding wife.
He revels all the day, makes debts on ev'ry side:
At once he plays, fights, sneaks, and quarrels far and wide.
His only wit consists in folly and wild pranks,
His only cleverness is that of mountebanks.
He lies, traduces, cheats.

SOLLER.

She's gath'ring now, I see,
Materials to compose my fun'ral eulogy.

SOPHIA.

The torments I endure are quite enough to kill,
Did I not know —

SOLLER.

Speak out!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes loves me still.

ALCESTES.

He loves, complains like you.

SOPHIA.

It mitigates my pain,
From one, at least, — from you, — compassion to obtain.
Alcestes, by this hand, this dear hand, I entreat
That you will ever keep your heart unchanged.

SOLLER.

How sweet
Her words are!

SOPHIA.

For this heart, which save for you ne'er glowed,
No other comfort knows than that by you bestowed.

ALCESTES.

I know of nought that's fit to match your noble heart.
(*He takes* SOPHIA *in his arms and kisses her.*)

SOLLER.

Alas! will no kind fate appear, to take my part?
My heart is full of woe.

SOPHIA.

My friend!

SOLLER.

'Tis quite enough.
I'm altogether sick of friendship and such stuff.
And since it seems that they have nothing more to say,
I wish they'd kiss no more, and forthwith go their way!

SOPHIA.

Unkind one, let me go!

SOLLER.

The deuce! What affectation!
"Unkind one, let me go!" that means capitulation.
"You ought to be ashamed!" the stale cry is of many,
As down the hill they fall. I wouldn't give a penny
Now for her virtue.

SOPHIA (*extricating herself*).

Friend, one final parting kiss,
And then farewell!

ALCESTES.

You go?

SOPHIA.

I go, for needful 'tis.

ALCESTES.

You love me, and you go?

SOPHIA.

I go, because I love.
I soon should lose a friend, did I not quickly move.
The course of one's laments to run at night prefers,
In some sure spot, where nought to startle us occurs.

We more confiding grow, when calmly we complain;
But for our weaker sex, the risks increase amain.
In over-confidence too many dangers lie:
A sorrow-softened heart the mouth will not deny
At such a happy time to friends for friendship's kisses.
A friend is still a man —

SOLLER.

She knows full well what this is.

SOPHIA.

Farewell, and be assured that I am still your lover.

SOLLER.

Quite close above my head the storm is passing over.
(*Exit* SOPHIA. ALCESTES *accompanies her through the middle door, which remains open. They are seen to stand together in the distance.*
For this once be content. I've small time for reflection:
The moment 'tis to fly; I'm off in this direction.
(*He quits the alcove, and hastens through the side door.*)

SCENE V.

ALCESTES (*returning*).

What wouldest thou, my heart? Indeed, 'tis passing strange,
How that dear creature has for thee endured no change!
Thy early gratitude for those past hours so bright
Of love's first happiness, has not departed quite.
What have I purposed not! What feelings have been mine!
Still uneffaced remains that image all divine,

Where love, in glorious wise, its presence first avowed, —
The image at whose shrine my heart with reverence bowed.
How all is altered now! What change comes o'er our lives!
Yet of that sacred glow a something still survives.
If truly thou'lt confess what made thee hither come,
The page will be turned o'er, thy love afresh will bloom.
And thy free-thinking ways, thy distant schemes, the shame
By thee for her devised, the plan which thou didst frame, —
How vile they now appear! Thou art distressed at last?
Before thou snaredst her, she long had held thee fast!
This is the lot of man! We hurry on apace,
And he who thinks the most is in the saddest case.
But now to urgent things: a plan must I invent
Whereby to-morrow she may have some money lent.
It is a cursed mischance: her fate my pity wakes.
Her husband, that vile wretch, her life a burden makes.
I've got here just enough. Let's think! — yes, it will do.
Were I a stranger e'en, her hard lot I must rue.
But, ah! this mournful thought my heart and mind oppresses —
My conduct far too much the cause of her distress is.
I could not hinder it; to happen thus 'twas fated.
What cannot now be changed, may be alleviated.
(*He opens the strong box.*)
The Devil! What is this? My strong box empty nearly?
Of all the silver there, three-fourths have vanished clearly.
I have the gold with me. The keys are in my pocket! —

All since the afternoon! My room — who could unlock it?
Sophia? Pshaw! But yes, — Sophia! Base suspicion!
My servant? No! that's, too, a foolish supposition.
He's fast asleep. Good man, his innocence I know.
Who then? By heaven, the thought impatient makes me grow.

ACT III.

Scene I. — *The Inn Parlour.*

HOST.

(*In a dressing-gown, sitting near the table, on which are a half-burnt candle, coffee-things, pipes and newspapers. After the first few verses he rises, and dresses himself during this scene and the beginning of the next.*

That letter, hang the thing! of sleep and rest it robs me.
This comes from doing what I oughtn't, well I see.
It seems impossible to make this matter out:
When one is doing wrong, the Devil's there, no doubt.
'Twas my vocation ne'er, and therefore I'm afraid;
And yet of any host it never should be said
He fears, when in the house strange noises he perceives.
For ghosts, as is well known, are close allied with thieves.
No man was in the house, not Soller nor Alcestes;
The waiter it was not; each maiden gone to rest is.
But stop! At early dawn, perchance 'tween three and four,
I heard a gentle noise: it was Sophia's door.
She, maybe, was the ghost at whose approach I fled:
It was a woman's foot, just like Sophia's tread.
But then, what did she there? One knows that women-kind

To pulling things about and meddling are inclined:
Guests' clothes and linen they inspect. I wish I first
Had finely frightened her, then into laughter burst.
She would have searched with me — the letter had been found:
My efforts, now in vain, had with success been crowned.
Curse it! One ne'er can think when one is in a strait,
And any plan that's good is thought of just too late!

SCENE II. — *The* HOST, SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

My father, only think! —

HOST.

You do not say good-morrow?

SOPHIA.

Oh, pardon me, papa! my head is full of sorrow.

HOST.

And why?

SOPHIA.

Alcestes' cash, which he received so lately,
Has altogether gone.

HOST.

That comes from gambling greatly.
They can't restrain themselves.

SOPHIA.

Not so: 'tis stolen!

HOST.

What!

SOPHIA.

Yes, stolen from his room!

HOST.

I wish the thief were shot!
Who is it? Quick!

SOPHIA.

Who knows?

HOST.

What! In this house, you say?

SOPHIA.

Out of the box which on his table stands all day.

HOST.

And when?

SOPHIA.

This night!

(HOST *aside*).

Since I so curious was, the scandal
Will surely fall on me, for they will find my candle.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

He mutters, looks confused. Can he the culprit be?
That he was in the room, his candle proves to me.

HOST (*aside*).

Can she have taken it? The notion makes me swear:
Cash yesterday ran short, and she to-night was there.
(*Aloud.*) This is a dreadful mess. Who injures us
take heed!
Respectable and cheap our watchwords are indeed.

SOPHIA.

Though he may bear the loss, 'tis we who'll suffer most:
The public will be sure to lay it to the host.

HOST.

I know that but too well. A dreadful mess, no doubt.
If 'tis a house-thief, who will find the rascal out?
Much trouble it will give.

SOPHIA.

What shall we do? Good lack!

HOST (*aside*).

Aha, she's much disturbed!
(*Aloud, in a more peevish tone.*) I wish he had it back!
Right glad were I.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

He now repents, 'tis my belief.
(*Aloud.*) And if it were restored, whoever was the thief,
He need not know, and soon 'twill from his memory pass.

HOST (*aside*).

If she is not the thief then write me down an ass.
(*Aloud.*) A good child you have been. My confidence in you —
Just wait! (*He goes to the door to see.*)

SOPHIA (*aside*).

By heaven! he means to make confession true!

HOST.

My child, I know you well. A lie you never told —

SOPHIA.

Sooner from all the world than you I'd aught withhold;
And so I hope that now you'll also be assured —

HOST.

You are my child: what can't be cured must be endured.

SOPHIA.

The best of hearts sometimes is subject to temptation.

HOST.

Oh, let the past no more occasion us vexation!
That you were in the room, no mortal knows but I.

SOPHIA (*startled*).

You know? —

HOST.

Yes, I was there. I heard you passing by.
I knew not who it was, and started off full speed.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

Yes, he the money has. There's now no doubt indeed.

HOST.

This morning heard I you, I lately recollected.

SOPHIA.

And, what is best of all, you will not be suspected:
I found the candle —

HOST.

You?

SOPHIA.

Yes, I!

HOST.

'Tis passing strange!
To give it back again, how can we best arrange?

SOPHIA.

You'll say, "Alcestes, sir, do spare my house, I pray!
Behold your money, I have found the thief to-day.
You know yourself how great we find temptation's force:
He scarcely had the cash, when vast was his remorse.
He came and gave it me. Here 'tis! Let him be pardoned
For his offence!" — I'm sure Alcestes' heart's not hardened.

HOST.

You certainly can use persuasion soft as honey.

SOPHIA.

Yes, that's the proper way.

HOST.

I first must have the money.

SOPHIA.

You have it not?

HOST.

How I should have it, I can't see.

SOPHIA.

How have it?

HOST.

Yes! Well, how? Unless you give it me.

SOPHIA.

Who has it?

HOST.

Who?

SOPHIA.

Of course, if 'tis not you?

HOST.

Absurd.

SOPHIA.

Where have you put it?

HOST.

I can't understand a word.
You haven't got it?

SOPHIA.

I?

HOST.

Yes!

SOPHIA.

How could that be so?

HOST (*making signs as if he were stealing*).

Eh!

SOPHIA.

I can't understand!

HOST.

Quite shameless, child, you grow.
You slip away when comes the time for restitution.
You have confess'd. For shame on such irresolution!

SOPHIA.

This is too much! You now make this vile accusation.
Just now you said that you gave way to the temptation.

HOST.

You toad! I said so? When? Is this the way you love me,
And show me due respect? A thief you try to prove me,
When you're the thief yourself!

SOPHIA.

My father!

HOST.

Yet you were
This morning in the room?

SOPHIA.

Yes!

HOST.

Yet you still can dare
To say you've not the cash?

SOPHIA.

That does not follow.

HOST.

Yes!

SOPHIA.

You, too, were there to-day —

HOST.

I'll pull your hair, unless
You hold your tongue and go! (*Exit* SOPHIA *crying.*)
You take the joke too far,
Unworthy one! — She's gone! Too impudent you are.
Perchance she thinks that lies will make him overlook it.
Enough, the money's gone, and she's the one who took it.

SCENE III. — ALCESTES (*in deep thought, in a frock-coat*). *The* HOST.

HOST (*in an embarrassed and entreating tone*).

Right sorrowful am I at what I've lately heard.
Well understand I, sir, how you by wrath are stirr'd;
And yet I beg that you will nothing say about it,
And I will do what's right. I pray you do not doubt it.
If in the town 'tis known, 'twill fill my foes with glee,
And their maliciousness will throw the guilt on me.
It was no stranger, sir. The culprit is indoors.
Be calm, and soon again the money shall be yours.
Pray, what was the amount?

ALCESTES.

A hundred dollars!

HOST.

What!

ALCESTES.

A hundred dollars, though —

HOST.

Contemptible are not!

ALCESTES.

Yet I am quite disposed my pardon to bestow,
Could I the culprit's name, and how he did it, know.

HOST.

Had I the money back, I ne'er would ask, I vow,
If Michael or if Jack had taken it, or how.

ALCESTES (*aside*).

My old attendant? No, he cannot be the thief.
And from my chamber too — It passes all belief.

HOST.

Why rack your brains like this? The trouble is in vain.
Enough, I'll find the cash!

ALCESTES.

My cash?

HOST.

I ask again
That none may know of it! We long have known each other:
Enough, I'll find your cash, so give yourself no bother!

ALCESTES.

You know then? —

HOST.

H'm! The cash you soon shall have, however.

ALCESTES.

But only tell me this —

HOST.

Not for the world, no, never!

ALCESTES.

Just tell me who it was.

HOST.

I say, I dare not say.

ALCESTES.

'Twas some one in the house?

HOST.

Don't ask me that, I pray!

ALCESTES.

Was it the servant girl?

HOST.

Good Hannah? No, not she.

ALCESTES.

The waiter 'twas, perchance?

HOST.

No, neither was it he.

ALCESTES.

The cook's a skilful hand —

HOST.

At dishing up a dinner.

ALCESTES.

The scullion Jack ?

HOST.

He ne'er would be so great a sinner.

ALCESTES.

The gard'ner it might be ?

HOST.

No, wrong again, I guess.

ALCESTES.

The gard'ner's son ?

HOST.

No, no !

ALCESTES.

Perchance —

HOST.

The house-dog ? — Yes !

ALCESTES (*aside*).

Just wait a bit, old fool ! I'll catch you by and by.
(*Aloud.*) Whoever was the thief, it doesn't signify,
If I my money get. (*He pretends to be leaving.*)

HOST.

True!

ALCESTES (*as if a sudden thought struck him*).

Host, I see by chance, sir,
My inkstand's empty. I this letter straight must answer.

HOST.

What! Yesterday it came: to answer it to-day,
Shows that it weighty is.

ALCESTES.

I ought not to delay.

HOST.

It is a charming thing to have to correspond.

ALCESTES.

It is not always so. The time one loses on't
Is worth more than the game.

HOST.

'Tis like a game of cards:
A single trump turns up, and past ill-luck rewards.
The letter yesterday important news, however,
Contains. Might I inquire —

ALCESTES.

Not for the world, no, never!

HOST.

Nought from America?

ALCESTES.

I say, I dare not say.

HOST.

Is Frederick ill again ?

ALCESTES.

Don't ask me that, I pray !

HOST.

Are matters changed in Hesse ? are people going ?

ALCESTES.

No !

HOST.

Perchance the Emperor —

ALCESTES.

Yes, that may well be so.

HOST.

Things in the North go wrong ?

ALCESTES.

I cannot swear to that.

HOST.

They secretly conspire ?

ALCESTES.

Oh ! people love to chat.

HOST.

There's no disaster, though?

ALCESTES.

Bravo! You soon will guess.

HOST.

Perchance in the late frost —

ALCESTES.

The hares were frozen? — Yes!

HOST.

You don't appear to place much confidence in me.

ALCESTES.

When folks mistrustful are, we trust them not, you see.

HOST.

What mark of confidence will suit your purpose better?

ALCESTES.

Well, tell me who's the thief: you then shall read my letter.
Right good the bargain is, which I to you now offer.
Will you the letter have?

HOST (*confused and eagerly*).

I must accept your proffer!
(*Aside.*) Would it were something else, which he from me would learn!

ALCESTES.

You see that one good turn deserves another turn.
That I'll the secret keep, I by my honour swear.

HOST (*aside*).

Would that this letter now less appetising were!
But if Sophia — she should see my tribulation!
No mortal could resist such wonderful temptation.
To master its contents, I all impatience am.

ALCESTES (*aside*).

No greyhound ever rushed so wildly at a ham.

HOST (*ashamed, giving way, and still hesitating*).

Well, as you wish it, sir, your great civility —

ALCESTES (*aside*).

He's biting now —

HOST.

Demands like confidence from me.
(*Doubtfully and half entreatingly.*)
You'll let me see at once the letter, sir, because —

ALCESTES (*holding out the letter*).

This moment!

HOST (*slowly approaching* ALCESTES *with his eyes fixed on the letter*).

Well, the thief —

ALCESTES.

The thief!

HOST.

Who stole it, was —

ALCESTES.

Well, out with it!

HOST.

Was my —

ALCESTES.

Well!

HOST (*in a resolute tone, whilst he comes up to* ALCESTES, *and tears the letter from his hand*).

Was my daughter!

ALCESTES (*astonished*).

What!

HOST (*comes forward, tears the cover to pieces in his eagerness to open the letter, and begins to read*).

"Right honourable sir!"

ALCESTES (*taking him by the shoulder*).

'Twas she? You're telling not
The truth.

HOST (*impatiently*).

Yes, it was she! And much distressed am I.
(*He reads.*) "And also" —

ALCESTES (*as above*).

No, good host! Sophia! 'Tis a lie!

HOST (*tears himself loose, and continues without answering him*).

"My much respected" —

ALCESTES (*as above*).

What! The guilty one was she?
I'm quite confounded.

HOST.

"Sir" —

ALCESTES (*as above*).

Now, pray just answer me!
How came it all about?

HOST.

You by and by shall hear.

ALCESTES.

Is it quite sure?

HOST.

Quite sure!

ALCESTES (*to himself, as he goes out*).

Methinks my course is clear.

Scene IV.

HOST (*reads and speaks between whiles*).

"And patron" — Has he gone? — "The very friendly way
In which you view my faults, induces me to-day
Once more to trouble you" — What faults would he confess?

"I feel assured, kind sir, you'll share my happiness."
That's good! — "To-day kind Heaven another joy has brought,
And you're the first of whom my thankful heart has thought.
My dear wife is confined of her sixth son." — With rage
I'm fit to die! — "The boy appeared upon the stage
Quite early." — Hang or drown the brat! the vile invention!
"And I make bold to ask if, in your condescension" —
I feel about to choke! To suffer such a blow,
Just when I'm getting old! I will not bear it, no!
Just wait a bit! Your due reward shall you receive:
Alcestes, you shall see! My house you straight shall leave.
So good a friend as me thus shamefully to treat!
I'd fain inflict on him a retribution meet.
But then my daughter! Oh! in such a scrape to get her!
And I've betrayed her for a mere godfather's letter!
(*He seizes hold of his wig.*)
Oh, donkey that I am! I'm in my dotage now!
Oh, letter, cash, and trick! I'll kill myself, I vow!
With what shall I begin? How punish such vile tricks?
(*He grasps a stick, and runs round the stage.*)
If any one comes near, I'll thrash him into snicks.
If I but had them here who planned the thing so wisely,
By all the powers that be, I'd currycomb them nicely!
I'll die unless I can — I'd give a sight of cash
To see the servant now a glass or bottle smash!
I shall devour myself. — Revenge, revenge for me!
(*He attacks his armchair and thrashes it.*)
Ha! Thou art dusty? Come! I'll take it out of thee!

Scene V.

The Host *continuing to strike.* Soller *enters and is frightened. He is in his domino, with his mask bound to his arm, and is half intoxicated.*

SOLLER.

What's this? Why, is he mad? Methinks I'd best be mute!
I shouldn't care to be that armchair's substitute!
Some evil spirit has the old man seized to-day:
'Twere better I were off. It isn't safe to stay.

HOST (*without seeing* SOLLER).

I can no more! Alas! how ache both back and arm!
(*He throws himself into the armchair.*)
My body's in a sweat.

SOLLER (*aside*).

Yes, motion makes us warm.
(*He shows himself to the* Host.)
Good father!

HOST.

Oh, the brute! The night in revels spends he:
I vex myself to death, and de'il a bit attends he.
The Shrovetide fool his cash at play and dancing loses,
And laughs, while holding here his carnival the deuce is!

SOLLER.

In such a rage!

HOST.

Just wait! No longer will I call so.

SOLLER.

What now?

HOST.

Alcestes! Child! Shall I inform him also?

SOLLER.

No! no!

HOST.

If you were hanged, 'twould be for me much better;
And that Alcestes, too, with his confounded letter.
(*Exit.*)

Scene VI.

SOLLER (*the very picture of terror*).

What's this? Alas! Perchance, ere many minutes flee —
Take good care of your skull! Your back will cudgelled be.
P'raps all has been found out. I'm in a burning fever,
So dreadful is my fright. Why, Doctor Faustus never
Was in so bad a case, or Richard Crook-back e'en!
Hell here, the gallows there, the cuckold in between!
(*He runs about like a madman, and finally recovers himself.*)
One's never happy made by stolen goods, you know.
Go, coward, scoundrel, go! Why are you frightened so?
Perchance 'tis not so bad. I'll soon know how I'll fare.
(*He sees* Alcestes *and runs away.*)
Alas! 'tis he! 'tis he! He'll seize me by the hair!

Scene VII.

ALCESTES (*fully dressed, with hat and sword*).

How fearful is the blow by which my heart oppressed is!
That wondrous creature whom the fancy of Alcestes
So tenderly the shrine of ev'ry virtue thought,
Who him the highest grade of fairest love first taught,
In whom god, maiden, friend, in one were all so blended,
And now so much abased! That vision now is ended.
'Tis well p'raps to descend a height so superhuman:
Like other women now, she's nothing but a woman;
But then, so deep! so deep! That drives me into madness.
My contumacious heart yearns after her with sadness.
How mean? Can'st thou not turn to good account the change?
Seize on the proffer'd bliss that comes in form so strange!
A matchless woman, whom you love so very dearly,
Needs cash. Alcestes, quick! The pence you give her, clearly
Would turn to pounds. But now, the cash herself she takes, —
'Tis well! If she once more parade of virtue makes,
Go! pluck your courage up, and speak thus in cold blood:
"You, madam, have perchance the money taken? Good!
I'm heartily rejoiced. Let no reserve be shown
In such a small affair, but treat mine as your own.
A confidential tone, as though 'tween man and wife, —
And virtue's self, if you enact it to the life,
Won't be alarmed, but e'en to yield will soon incline.
She comes! You are confused? 'Tis an unhappy sign!

You guilty deem yourself; you cheat me in addition;
Your heart is ill-disposed, but weak's your disposition.[1]

Scene VIII. — Alcestes, Sophia.

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, what means this? My sight you seem to shun —
Has solitude for you such vast attractions won?

ALCESTES.

I know not what it is impels me at this season:
We oft soliloquise without a special reason.

SOPHIA.

Your loss indeed is great, and well may cause vexation.

ALCESTES.

It nothing signifies: I feel no irritation.
To lose a little cash small self-restraint demands:
Who knows but that it may have fallen in good hands?

SOPHIA.

No loss will your kind heart allow on us to fall.

[1] In the later editions, the following five lines take the place of the nine concluding lines of this scene:

"You find yourself in need of ready money? Good!
No secret of it make! Let no reserve be shown
In taking what is mine, but treat it as your own." —
She comes! All my false calm at once has flown away.
You think she took the cash, and yet would say her nay.

E. A. B.

ALCESTES.

A little openness this pain had saved us all.

SOPHIA.

How must I take this?

ALCESTES (*smiling*).

What?

SOPHIA.

What can your meaning be?

ALCESTES.

Sophia, me you know! Have confidence in me!
The money's gone, and where 'tis lying, let it lie!
I should have held my tongue, if sooner known had I
That thus the matter stands —

SOPHIA (*astonished*).

You know, then, all about it?

ALCESTES (*with tenderness; he seizes her hand and kisses it*).

Your father! Yes, I know: my dearest, do not doubt it!

(SOPHIA *surprised and ashamed*).

And you forgive?

ALCESTES.

A joke, who'd deem it as a crime?

SOPHIA.

Methinks —

ALCESTES.

Pray suffer me to speak my mind this time.
Alcestes' heart toward you with love's still running over.
Fate severed you from me, and yet I am your lover;
Your heart is ever mine, as mine unchanged you find;
My money's yours as though by law assigned;
You have an equal right to all that I possess;
Take what you will, if with your love you me will bless. (*He embraces her, and she is silent.*)
Command whate'er you want! I'm quite prepared to grant it.

SOPHIA (*haughtily, whilst she tears herself away from him*).

I prize your money, sir! Indeed, I do not want it.
I scarcely understand a tone so strange and fervent.
Ha? You mistake me —

ALCESTES (*piqued*).

Oh! your most obedient servant
Knows you indeed too well; and what he wants, he knows,
And sees not why your wrath thus suddenly o'erflows.
When one so far goes wrong —

SOPHIA (*astonished*).

Goes wrong? Pray, in what sense?

ALCESTES.

Madam!

SOPHIA (*angrily*).

What mean you, sir?

ALCESTES.

Forgive my diffidence.
I love you far too much to think of telling it.

SOPHIA (*with indignation*).

Alcestes!

ALCESTES.

Well, then, ask papa, if you think fit!
He knows, so seems it —

SOPHIA (*with an outbreak of vehemence as above*).

What? Give me an answer true!
I am not joking, sir!

ALCESTES.

He says that it was you —

SOPHIA (*as above*).

Well, what?

ALCESTES.

That it was you, — by whom the cash was taken.

SOPHIA (*with anger and tears, while she turns away*).

He dares? O God! By shame so utterly forsaken!

ALCESTES (*entreatingly*).

Sophia!

SOPHIA (*turned away from him*).

You're not worth —

ALCESTES (*as above*).

Sophia!

SOPHIA.

Leave the place!

ALCESTES.

Pray pardon me!

SOPHIA.

Away! Forgive such conduct base?
My father scruples not to rob me of my honour!
Oh, poor Sophia! Thus Alcestes looks upon her?
Sooner than tell the truth, my life I'd forfeit rather —
But now it must come out! — The robber — was my father! (*Exit hastily.*)

Scene IX.

Alcestes. *Afterward* Soller.

ALCESTES.

Would I could make it out! Here is a pretty mess!
Only the Devil now this riddle strange can guess!
Two persons who the best of characters have had,
Accuse each other! — 'Tis enough to drive one mad.
No story such as this has ever reached my ears,
And yet I've known them both for many, many years.
This is a case where thought no proper clue reveals:
The more one meditates, the greater fool one feels.
Sophia! the old man! Could either of them thieve?
Had Soller been accused, that well could I believe:
On him could but one spark of mere suspicion fall!
But he the livelong night, I know, was at the ball.

SOLLER (*in his usual dress and rather intoxicated*).

There sits the Devil's imp, after his night-long revel!
Could I but seize your neck, I'd scrag you, master Devil!

ALCESTES (*aside*).

He comes as if bespoke!
(*Aloud.*) Well, Soller, what's the news?

SOLLER.

The noise the music made has given me the blues.
(*He rubs his forehead.*)
My headache's dreadful.

ALCESTES.

You were at the ball: were many
Ladies there too?

SOLLER.

About as usual! When there's any
Bacon, the mice will seek the trap.

ALCESTES.

Was't merry?

SOLLER.

Quite!

ALCESTES.

You danced?

SOLLER.

I but looked on.
(*Aside.*) At your fine dance last night!

ALCESTES.

What! Soller did not dance? Why, how came that about?

SOLLER.

I went there with the full intention, there's no doubt.

ALCESTES.

And yet you didn't?

SOLLER.

No! My headache was so bad.
And so, for dancing not, a good excuse I had.

ALCESTES.

Indeed!

SOLLER.

And what was worse, I found out to my cost,
The more I heard and saw, I sight and hearing lost.

ALCESTES.

So bad? I'm sorry for't! 'Twas quite a sudden fit?

SOLLER.

Oh, no! since you first came I've twinges had of it,
And longer.

ALCESTES.

That is strange!

SOLLER.

No remedy I know.

ALCESTES.

Your head with warm cloths rub: 'twill put you in a glow,
And p'raps you'll then be cured.

SOLLER (*aside.*)

You're chaffing me, my friend?
(*Aloud.*) 'Tis not such easy work.

ALCESTES.

'Twill answer in the end.
And yet you're rightly served. I'll one suggestion make:
You ne'er by any chance your poor wife with you take,
When to a ball you go. Small wisdom, sir, is shown,
In leaving a young wife in her cold bed alone.

SOLLER.

She likes to stop at home, and let me masquerade:
Well knows she how to warm herself, without my aid.

ALCESTES.

That's funny!

SOLLER.

Yes! When one is fond of dainty food,
One doesn't need a hint to scent out what is good.

ALCESTES (*piqued*).

Why all this hyperbole?

SOLLER.

My meaning's plain I think:
Exempli gratiâ, I vastly like to drink
Father's old wine: but he my taste for it deplores, —
He spares his own; and so I drink it out of doors.

ALCESTES (*with resentment*).

You'd best be careful, sir! —

SOLLER.

Most noble squire of ladies,
She's now my wife: to that, by you no def'rence paid is.
Her husband maybe deems she's something in addition.

ALCESTES (*with suppressed anger*).

Fine husband! I defy the slightest admonition;
And if you should presume a single word to say —

SOLLER (*frightened. Aside*).

How fine! The end will be, that I must ask him,
Pray

How virtuous is she?
(*Aloud.*) My hearth is still my hearth,
Despite strange cooks!

ALCESTES.

Beside your wife, how small your worth!
So virtuous and fair! A soul of purity!
What matchless dower she brought! A very angel she!

SOLLER.

Her blood, too, as I've found, has much expansive power:
Head-ornaments for me were also in her dower.
For such a wife was I predestinated found,
And e'en before my birth was as a cuckold crowned.

ALCESTES (*breaking out*).

Now, Soller!

SOLLER (*impertinently*).

Well, what now?

ALCESTES (*restraining himself*).

I tell you, hold your peace!

SOLLER.

I'd like to see the man who'd make my talking cease!

ALCESTES.

If place allowed, you'd get a proper castigation!

SOLLER (*half aloud*).

He'd fight a duel for my wife's good reputation!

ALCESTES.

Indeed!

SOLLER (*as before*).

No mortal knows so well, how lies the land.

ALCESTES.

The deuce!

SOLLER.

Alcestes, we perceive how matters stand.
Now wait! just wait a bit! The subject we'll pursue;
And we shall understand how gentlemen like you
The corn-fields for themselves will reap, yes, ev'ry one,
And for the husbands leave the gleanings, when they've done.

ALCESTES.

I wonder much that you should be so bold, sir, knowing —

SOLLER.

Full oftentimes my eyes with tears are overflowing:
Each day I feel as though I'm sniffing onions.

ALCESTES (*angrily and resolutely*).

How?
You go too far! Speak out! Explain your meaning now!
Your tongue to loosen I shall be compelled, I ween.

SOLLER (*boldly*).

I have a right, methinks, to know what I have seen.

ALCESTES.

Seen? What does seeing mean?

SOLLER.

It means, what we discover
When we both see and hear.

ALCESTES.

Ha!

SOLLER.

Why with wrath boil over?

ALCESTES (*with the most determined anger*).

What have you heard? What seen? Reply without delay!

SOLLER (*frightened, trying to go away*).

Allow me, my good sir!

ALCESTES (*holding him back*).

Where go you?

SOLLER.

Right away!

ALCESTES.

You shall not leave this spot!

SOLLER (*aside*).

I would the man were dead!

ALCESTES.

What have you heard?

SOLLER.

I? Nought! 'Twas only what they said!

ALCESTES (*with angry impetuosity*).

Who was the man?

SOLLER.

The man? A man —

ALCESTES (*more violently and attacking him*).

Be quick! Begin!

SOLLER (*in anguish*).

Who saw it with his eyes.
(*More boldly.*) I'll call the servants in.

ALCESTES (*seizing him by the neck*).

Who was it?

SOLLER (*trying to tear himself loose*).

What? The deuce!

ALCESTES (*holding him more firmly*).

No more my temper try!
(*Drawing his sword.*)
Who is the wicked wretch? the rogue? the liar?

SOLLER (*falling on his knees in his terror*).

I!

ALCESTES (*threateningly*).

What did you see?

SOLLER (*timidly*).

I saw what proves that we're but human:
You, sir, are but a man; Sophia is a woman.

ALCESTES (*as above*).

And then?

SOLLER.

Precisely what we see in each direction,
When men and women have reciprocal affection.

ALCESTES.

And that's ? —

SOLLER.

I should have thought you'd know by intuition.

ALCESTES.

Well ?

SOLLER.

Surely you'll not dare to scout the supposition.

ALCESTES.

Indeed ! More plainly speak !

SOLLER.

Release me ! Oh, pray do !

ALCESTES (*still as above*).

It's called ? The Devil !

SOLLER.

Well, it's called a rendezvous.

ALCESTES (*startled*).

You lie !

SOLLER (*aside*).

He's frightened now.

ALCESTES (*aside*).

How could he know it e'er ?
(*He sheathes his sword.*)

SOLLER (*aside*).

Take courage!

ALCESTES (*aside*).

Who betrayed that we together were?
(*Recovering himself.*)
What mean you by your words?

SOLLER (*insolently*).

We'll now make all things pleasant.
The comedy last night! I happened to be present.

ALCESTES (*astonished*).

Where?

SOLLER.

In the closet.

ALCESTES.

Oh! you thus were at your ball!

SOLLER.

And you were at your feast! Without one drop of gall,
Two words: though secret plans you gentry may pursue,
Be sure that by and by they'll be exposed to view.

ALCESTES.

It's clear that you're the thief. I'd sooner have a raven
Or jackdaw in my house, than such a wicked craven
As you! For shame, bad man!

SOLLER.

I'm bad, I must confess;
But then you gentlemen are always right, I guess!
Our property you think to handle at your pleasure:
No laws you keep, but deal to us another measure.
The principle's the same: some woman love, some gold.
If you would hang us, let your passions be controlled!

ALCESTES.

You're very impudent —

SOLLER.

I'm impudent, no doubt:
In truth, it is no joke with horns to go about.
In short, we mustn't make the thing a cause of strife:
'Twas I who took your cash, and you who took my wife.

ALCESTES (*threateningly*).

What took I?

SOLLER.

Nothing, sir! It long had been your own,
Before 'twas mine.

ALCESTES.

If —

SOLLER.

I must leave the thing alone.

ALCESTES.

The gallows for the thief!

SOLLER.

Is it unknown to you
That stringent laws provide for other people too?

ALCESTES.

Soller!

SOLLER (*makes a sign of beheading*).

Yes: there's the axe, if you indulge your passions —

ALCESTES.

Are you an expert, then, and understand the fashions?
You'll certainly be hanged, or flogged in any case.

SOLLER (*pointing to his forehead*).

I'm branded as it is.

SCENE X. — *The Above. The* HOST, SOPHIA.

SOPHIA (*at the bottom of the stage*).

His accusations base
My father still maintains.

HOST (*at the bottom of the stage*).

My daughter still won't yield.

SOPHIA.

There is Alcestes!

HOST (*seeing* ALCESTES).

Ha!

SOPHIA.

The truth will be revealed.

HOST (*to* ALCESTES).

She is the thief, good sir!

SOPHIA (*on the other side*).

The thief, sir, there you see!

ALCESTES (*looks at them both laughingly, and then says in the same tone as they, pointing to* SOLLER).

He is the thief!

SOLLER (*aside*).

Alas for my poor skin!

SOPHIA.

He?

HOST.

He?

ALCESTES.

You are both innocent: 'tis he!

HOST.

I'd run a nail
With pleasure through his head!

SOPHIA.

You?

SOLLER (*aside*).

Thunderbolts and hail!

HOST.

I'd like —

ALCESTES.

Be patient, sir: your wrath is ill-directed.
Although she guiltless was, Sophia was suspected.
She came to visit me. The step was bold, 'tis true;
Yet for her virtue I —
(*To* SOLLER.) But you were present too!
(SOPHIA *is astonished.*)
To us was this unknown: propitious was the night,
Her virtue —

SOLLER.

There it was I had a pretty fright.

ALCESTES (*to the* HOST).

But you ?

HOST.

Sir, I was there from curiosity ;
That cursèd letter I so anxious was to see.
I wonder, sir, that you such conduct manifested !
That fine godfather's trick I have not yet digested.

ALCESTES.

Excuse the jest ! And you, Sophia, faithful wife —
Will surely pardon me ?

SOPHIA.

Alcestes !

ALCESTES.

Ne'er in life
Your virtue will I doubt. Forgive that rendezvous !
As virtuous as good —

SOLLER.

I half believe it too !

ALCESTES (*to* SOPHIA).

And also you'll forgive our Soller ?

SOPHIA.

Willingly !
(*She gives him her hand.*)
There !

ALCESTES (*to the* HOST).

Allons!

HOST (*gives* SOLLER *his hand*).

Steal no more!

SOLLER.

What's distant, time brings nigh!

ALCESTES.

But where's my money now?

SOLLER.

I took it in my trouble:
That gamester plagued me till he nearly bent me double.
I knew not what to do; I stole, and paid the debt:
And now I'll give you back the dollars left me yet.

ALCESTES.

I'll give you what is spent.

SOLLER.

Now all has come out right.

ALCESTES.

I only hope you'll grow quite honest, staid, polite!
And if you ever dare again with me to palter!—

SOLLER.

So be it!—For this once, we've all escaped the halter.

THE END.

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